



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

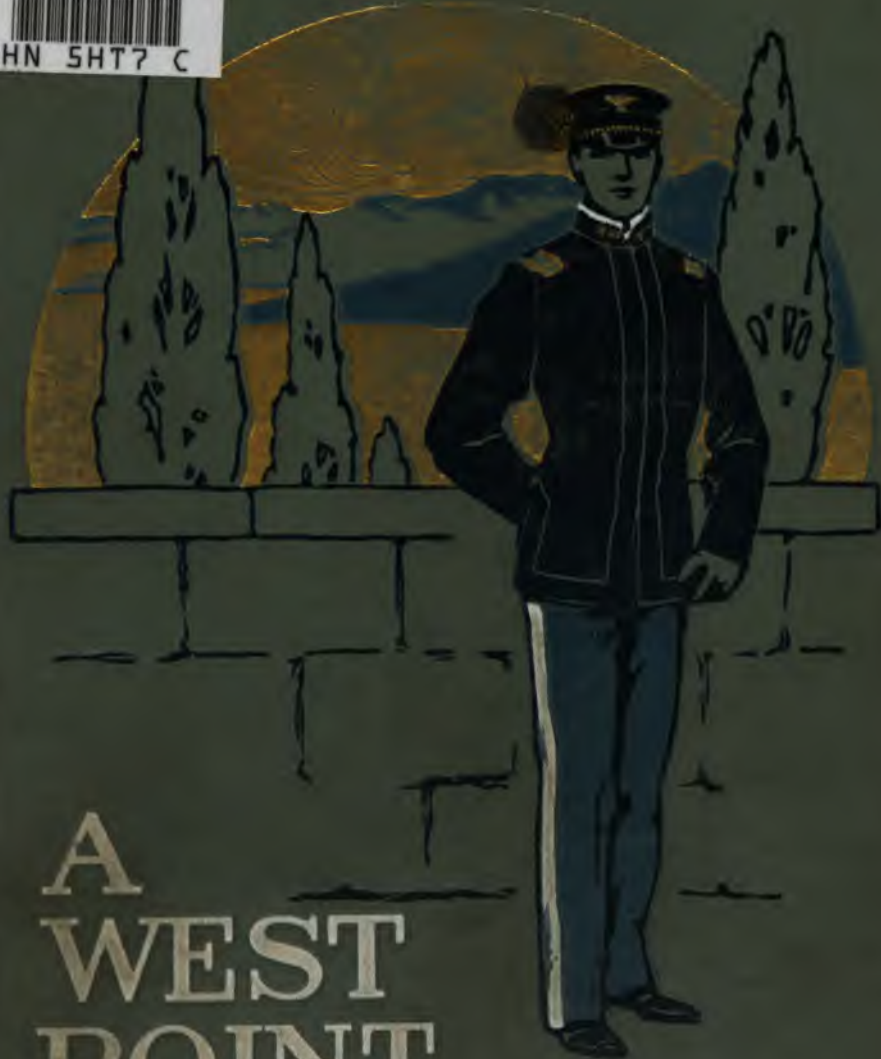
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

HN 5HT7 C



A WEST POINT LIEUTENANT

Capt. PAUL B. MALONE
U. S. ARMY

Jul 1911.44
K12875



Harvard College
Library

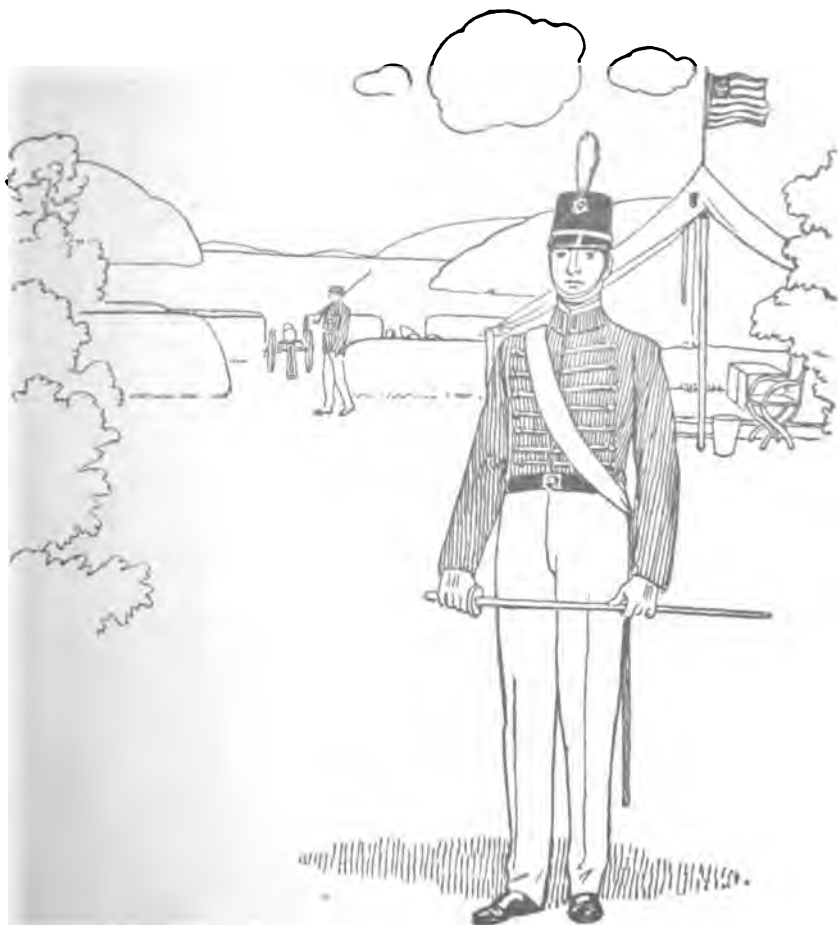


FROM THE BEQUEST OF

Lucy Osgood

OF MEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS





for

John Labun Hathaway



*A WELL-DRESSED MAN WALKED
TO THE DESK*

AWEST POINT LEUTENANT

by
Capt. Paul B. Malvern
U. S. Army

WITH
Training His Way to West Point
A Parade at West Point
A Close Point Training
A West Point Cadet

Illustrated by
F. A. GATFER

**THE PENN
PUBLISHING
COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA
M C M X**





A WEST POINT LIEUTENANT



By
Capt. Paul B. Malone
U. S. Army

AUTHOR OF
Winning His Way to West Point
A Plebe at West Point
A West Point Yearling
A West Point Cadet

Illustrated by
F. A. CARTER

**THE PENN
PUBLISHING
COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA
M C M X I**

Juu 1911.44



Lucy Osgood fund

**COPYRIGHT
1911 BY
THE PENN
PUBLISHING
COMPANY**



Introduction

DOUGLAS ATWELL was one of the young Americans who answered the call of his country in the Spanish War. He went to the Philippines, where in several hard campaigns he proved his worth, and finally won a chance to compete for a West Point cadetship. All this was told in "Winning His Way to West Point." The following books of the series, "A Plebe at West Point," "A West Point Yearling," and "A West Point Cadet," gave the history of his struggles and his successes at the famous military academy. "Klondyke Jones" was in the same company with Douglas in the Philippines. So was Jackson, who also went to West Point, but did not last long there. Beverly Van Duyne was another cadet who was not cut out for "an officer and a gentleman." Swayne and O'Connor were West Point friends, and Alice Dryden a visitor there when Douglas met her. Benedict was a Yale man whom Douglas had met when playing football for West Point.

Contents

I.	AN UNEXPECTED DETAIL	9
II.	LIGHT ON THE BID OF JACOBS, SHARP & Co.	28
III.	A THEATER PARTY	46
IV.	DOUGLAS RECEIVES A STRANGE LETTER	67
V.	A MIDNIGHT VISITOR	85
VI.	A VISIT TO A PROMINENT BANKING HOUSE	104
VII.	A CLOSER VIEW OF THE MAN ON THE CORNER	123
VIII.	A VISIT TO THE SLUMS	143
IX.	A NEW CLUE	160
X.	DOUGLAS ANNOUNCES HIS PRINCIPLES .	176
XI.	ROLAND REPORTS AND DOUGLAS EN- JOYS A WALK IN THE PARK . . .	195
XII.	THE ARRESTS	214
XIII.	TOM JENKINS COMES OUT OF HIDING .	234
XIV.	ON THE DOCKS AT MIDNIGHT . . .	252
XV.	A PAINFUL INTERVIEW	272
XVI.	EARTHQUAKE AND FIRE	288
XVII.	A THRILLING RESCUE	306
XVIII.	FIGHTING THE FLAMES	327
XIX.	A MAN IN THE BANKING HOUSE . . .	345
XX.	IN THE HANDS OF FATE	361

Illustrations

	PAGE
A WELL-DRESSED MAN WALKED TO THE DESK	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"I THINK IT IS TRUE"	63
"WHAT IS THE AMOUNT?"	120
"I'VE GOT WHAT YOU WANTED TO KNOW"	194
"YOU WILL HAVE TO COME WITH ME"	232
ALL DROPPED IN THEIR TRACKS	262
"I KNOW YOU CANNOT REFUSE"	374

A West Point Lieutenant

CHAPTER I

AN UNEXPECTED DETAIL

“ A MESSAGE for Mr. Atwell.”

A daintily dressed maid stood on the threshold of the dining-room at Fort McDowell, California, and waited instructions from Mrs. Swayne, who was entertaining a group of young army friends at her first dinner party.

Lieutenant Swayne had returned but a few weeks before from a short wedding trip, and on this sweet April evening had assembled his nearest friends to celebrate the opening of his cozy home at the famous old post in the harbor of San Francisco. The guests of the evening were selected from a list of comrades true and tried who had been Lieutenant Swayne's associates during the four eventful years of his life at West Point, and from the friends of his young bride with whom he had danced “ Auf Wiedersehen ” at the graduation hop. Douglas

Atwell, Bobby MacGregor, and Karl Krumms, resplendent in their special evening dress uniforms, had never enjoyed a more happy evening than this in the company of their charming hostess and her guests, Miss Alice Dryden, Eleanor Dodds and Gertrude Atwell.

The balm of spring time was in the air, permitting the windows to be slightly open and the entrancing odor of California flowers mingled with the aroma of the coffee.

The happy laughter which was resounding through the room was interrupted by the entrance of the maid with her low-toned announcement of a "message for Mr. Atwell."

Mrs. Swayne, a stranger to the customs of the service, glanced appealingly at her husband.

"Bring it in, Betty," said Swayne promptly. "A message at this hour must mean something important. We will make Douglas tell us about it. No star chamber proceedings to-night."

Betty brought the message book, and Douglas signed his initials opposite the official entry—"Letter No. — Lieutenant Atwell," and laid the sealed envelope beside his plate. All eyes

instinctively followed his movements and conversation paused, for curiosity was aroused and could not be appeased till the contents of that letter were known.

"You have our permission to read your letter, Mr. Atwell," said Mrs. Swayne, sweetly.

"And our permission," added Bobby MacGregor, "to tell the secrets it contains."

"I don't like to open it," said Douglas. "I have a feeling that something disagreeable is contained in the letter."

"But perhaps it requires immediate action," suggested Bobby MacGregor appealingly. "Perhaps you go to Washington as the President's aide—or dollars to doughnuts you go to West Point as a Tac.—to coach the football team."

Exclamations of delight echoed from all sides, but Douglas still hesitated.

"Open it, please, Mr. Atwell," said Alice Dryden, "and satisfy our curiosity."

"All right," said Douglas smiling. "I am afraid of it, but you ask it and here goes."

He tore open the envelope, glanced down the page and with a look of relief handed the typewritten sheet to Alice Dryden.

The guests had risen and were gathering around him with cries of "Read it, read it, read it, let us know the secret."

Alice walked into the parlor, "came to attention," and in fine imitation of the adjutant at parade, read :

*Headquarters Department of California,
San Francisco, Cal., April —, 190—.*

LIEUTENANT DOUGLAS ATWELL,
— *Infantry,*
Through Official Channels.

The commanding general directs that you report to-morrow, the —th instant, for temporary duty to the chief quartermaster at San Francisco, Cal.

Very respectfully,

Adjutant General.

"I don't like it myself, Mr. Atwell," said Alice thoughtfully, as she handed back the letter, while Bobby groaned his disappointment.

Alice sat down at the piano and ran her beautiful, well-trained fingers across the keys, filling the room with a flood of gentle melody.

"What shall I sing?" she asked, glancing

up at Douglas, who stood with elbow resting on the top of the piano as he searched through the sheets of music for something to his liking. His tastes were simple indeed. He liked songs for their associations rather than for their artistic merit, and in a moment he had found one which pleasantly recalled the past. Selections from the great operas had been passed. His choice was the simple Scottish melody, "The Land of the Leal."

"Do you remember it?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Alice with sparkling eyes. "I sang it to you at Captain Milton's home when you were the football hero of the yearling class at West Point. I thought you had forgotten."

The crash of chords which followed drowned Douglas' awkward attempt at a reply.

It did not seem possible that "The Land of the Leal" was eventually to be evolved from that harmonious uproar, but presently the plaintive and melancholy sweetness which suggest the loneliness and poetry of peasant life in the Scottish highlands seemed to thrill through the music, and Alice Dryden tossed back her handsome head and began to sing.

Her voice had rounded with the lapse of years, had mellowed and sweetened under the training of the best tutors her wealthy parents could secure, and now, throwing all the fine enthusiasm of young womanhood into her efforts, she found herself capable of reaching the hearts of her hearers by the rendition of the simplest melodies. Her preference was for the classics, yet her fondness for the best music did not destroy her sense of fun. So classics were followed with "rags," and those with light operatics, and for nearly an hour a delighted group listened.

Then followed the simple games which contribute so much to the pleasures of small garrison functions—"Up Jenkins," and parlor football, "The Prince of Wales has lost his hat," et cetera, were all played with a zest and enthusiasm which evoked peals of laughter from the happy group till nearly midnight. Then the party broke up and Lieutenant and Mrs. Swayne were left with their guests, Alice and Eleanor, to talk over their impressions of the evening, and to rearrange a sadly disturbed dwelling.

Many events had passed into history since

these friends had been together at the Military Academy. Lieutenant Swayne had distinguished himself in action against the Moros in the Philippines, and had returned with his regiment to the United States, where Douglas and Karl Krumms had joined the commissioned ranks.

In spite of an ardent admiration for Alice Dryden, the handsome Swayne had met the girl of his choice among the fair daughters of San Francisco, and was now embarking on the long career of army life with his young bride.

It was by accident only that the Drydens had found themselves in San Francisco on this happy occasion. "Important business matters made it necessary for papa to come to San Francisco," explained Alice, "and I jumped at the opportunity of accompanying him when I found that so many of the friends whom I met at West Point were here."

Since her mother's death, nearly three years before the occurrence of the events herein recorded, Alice had become her father's almost constant companion, and went with him wherever his great business interests demanded his presence. They were now located at the

most luxurious hotel of San Francisco, yet this simple affair at the army home of an old friend had given her more pleasure than any social event in which she had participated for several years.

To the officers concerned, the evening was an equally pleasant event.

The strenuous winter season of indoor training was over. The garrison schools, which make of the modern army post a small school of instruction almost as exacting as West Point, had closed, and the young officers hailed with delight the arrival of spring time with its outdoor exercises, and leisure evenings which offer the present day opportunity for social affairs before the departure of troops for summer maneuvers.

For Lieutenant Douglas Atwell the duty of an army garrison had possessed a charm and an absorbing interest which had filled his every moment with satisfaction. In his very first year's experience as an officer, he had come to realize the magnitude and complexity of his profession, and to understand the immensity of the task involved in making himself fit to lead the troops entrusted to his com-

mand. His energy and enthusiasm early attracted the attention of his superiors and won for him an appointment as quartermaster of his battalion, a trifling honor indeed, but one indicative of the esteem in which his services were already held by his commanding officer.

This work brought him occasionally into contact with the chief quartermaster of the department, an officer quick to appreciate a worthy subordinate and equally quick to utilize his energies. Thus it happened that when the chief quartermaster needed a young officer for a period of temporary duty in his office he had no hesitation in asking for the services of Lieutenant Atwell.

It was therefore with a feeling of some satisfaction that Douglas entered his quarters after the affair at Lieutenant Swayne's home and reread the letter which upset the final course at dinner and set all the ladies agog with excitement.

"Are you pleased, Douglas?" asked Gertrude.

"I certainly am," said he, quietly. "It offers me my first opportunity."

"Why were you afraid of opening the envelope?" she asked as she watched him keenly.

"I don't know," he said. "One never breaks the seal of an official envelope without some feeling of anxiety, and this was no exception to the rule. I had a feeling that something was wrong, just as I used to know in the Philippines that trouble was brewing in the darkness even though the night was as still as death. Everything has been so calm and peaceful since I came into the service that I did not like to break the charm, and I felt as if I were being pushed into a fight."

Douglas and his sister stood in the hall of their quarters, the dim light from a shaded chandelier falling softly upon his gold shoulder knots and setting off his fine athletic figure to great advantage.

Gertrude laid her hands upon his shoulders and looked up into his face.

"Did you ever lose a fight, Douglas?" she asked.

"No," he said thoughtfully. "I don't think I ever did, Trudes."

"Well, do you remember when you and I used to drive the cattle out to pasture in the

spring after milking hour when we were children in the Shawangunk Mountains?"

"I shall never forget it," he said softly.

"You haven't forgotten that if you see the new moon for the first time over the right shoulder good luck is sure to come?" she said, smiling at the folly of the old superstition.

"No."

"Well then, if there is going to be any fighting you will win. I saw the new moon to-night over my right shoulder as we came out of Mr. Swayne's house, and I made sure that Alice Dryden saw it in the same way."

Douglas laughed, and together they tiptoed up-stairs to the second floor and exchanged good-nights upon the landing, and Douglas entered his room.

In the adjoining room Gertrude and his mother slept, the latter now far advanced in years, living only in the happiness of seeing her boy happy and successful in the strange walk of life into which a stranger fate had brought him.

After his graduation from West Point Douglas Atwell had devoted all his earnings to making a home for his mother and sister,

and now, after three years' commissioned service he found himself comfortably located, his sister's collegiate education finished, and the future bright with prospects of continued success.

He lighted the gas and gazed about his tidy room, the walls of which were hung with many sketches, most of which were the products of his own pen and brush, for a remarkable ability to sketch was his one great accomplishment. Every great event in a life full of dramatic interest was here recorded with an artistic vigor which suggested the ardent spirit of the talented young artist. Above his chiffonier hung an excellent sketch recording the death of Bill Smathers, the Queer Fellow, who died on the banks of the Quingua, in the Philippines, died as only a brave soldier knows how to die in order that a comrade might live. That comrade was Douglas Atwell, once a private soldier of Company M, —th Infantry, who had won his way to West Point by conspicuous gallantry in the campaign against Aguinaldo.

"Had it not been for you, Bill," mused Douglas, "my bones would have been whiten-

ing in the tomb since that day in 1899. You saved me for these things," and his eyes sought the sketches which recorded the fights, the football struggles, the feats of horsemanship, and the few social events of his life at West Point on which memory loved to linger.

A profusion of photographs adorned the mantel and hung from small gilt frames upon the wall. There were Swayne and Rory O'Connor, Bobby MacGregor, Zeke Shanks, Abraham, and a host of others; Bill Hardin and Sam Smoke were there too, and even Leland Carlyle Jackson was not forgotten—sketched in a group and marked "I. C."¹

Douglas looked at them with a grim smile. How they had filled his life with anxiety and misery during the four eventful years of his cadetship!

And there was Beverly Van Duyne, cousin of Alice Dryden, whose exit from the Academy Douglas had materially assisted. Like the trophies gathered at West Point about which the blood of patriots dripped, like the nameless tablet in the chapel which records the treason of one who wore the uniform, every

¹ I. C.—Inspector's term for "inspected and condemned."

sketch in this interesting room suggested the story of a trial or a triumph, while among the photographs lurked the veiled suggestion of a treachery conquered or a personal conflict successfully conducted.

These were for the benefit of friends, but filed away in a drawer of his desk he had a few records exempt from the scrutiny of every eye but his own.

Douglas rose, opened his desk and drew out his West Point portfolio. Little sketches of his child life in the Shawangunk Mountains were ignored, the interesting scenes of Plebe Barracks had no attraction. The leaves turned rapidly until the best sketch of his life stood revealed—that of Alice Dryden singing “The Land of the Leal” at the afternoon tea given for the football players at Captain Milton’s home when Cadet Douglas Atwell was the yearling star of the team.

It was midnight before Douglas closed his sketch-book and went to bed, and one o’clock before he found it possible to sleep, but the next morning at 6:30 o’clock he was up according to his custom and anxious to under-

take the new duties imposed upon him by the order received the night before.

An early breakfast, a visit to the adjutant's office to report his departure in obedience to his orders, and Douglas set out in his staff "cits"¹ for the chief quartermaster's office in the city.

Only the chief clerk and two assistants had arrived when Douglas reached the Phelan Building and entered the office which not only transacted the business of the department of California but also managed the transport service of the Pacific.

The rooms were open, and Douglas beheld the numerous desks of the office force and gasped as he thought of the complexity of the system of which he was to form a part, if only for a few days.

"I suppose I am to do some such important work as counting pairs of damaged breeches or superintending the invoicing of shovels and picks to troops in the department," mused he as the chief clerk entered with a bundle of papers, and paused in surprise as he saw the young officer.

¹ "Cits"—citizen's clothes.

"A telephone message has just been received to the effect that, due to sudden illness, the chief quartermaster will not be at the office to-day. Major ——, the assistant, is absent on duty in Washington, so you are the only officer in the office to-day, sir."

Douglas tried to look undisturbed as he realized that he had suddenly become the chief of this tremendous concern, but his voice sounded far away as he replied, "Very well; what is there to be attended to?"

He hung his hat on the chief quartermaster's rack and took his seat at the big desk over which business was each year transacted involving the expenditure of millions of dollars.

"The chief quartermaster says that all important matters will be delayed pending his return to duty," said the chief clerk. "Routine matters will go ahead as usual, and bids for some construction work must be opened to-day at nine o'clock according to regulations."

Douglas nodded. He had had some experience in handling small contracts on the post and knew the procedure in general.

The chief clerk spread out the envelopes, red inked, sealed with wax, and bulging with their official contents made out in triplicate. Five bids had been received, and as the office clock recorded the hour of 9 A. M. it was necessary to open them at once.

Douglas ripped open the big envelopes and laid their contents side by side. His eyes ran eagerly over the lines of the first document and halted upon the figures indicating the amount of money involved—\$250,000.

One quarter of a million!

He, a second lieutenant at a salary of \$128.50 per month, was possibly to have a voice in the awarding of these contracts. Upon the integrity of such men as he the government must depend for the honest and faithful disbursing of its military appropriations and the only guarantee of honesty the government required was the word of the responsible officer together with his voucher to the effect that the money was properly expended.

Douglas leaned back in his chair and gazed upon the banked-up papers with glistening eyes.

What a magnificent trust! What an honor to be able to handle such a vast amount as this and to place it, dollar for dollar, exacting full value for every cent—not for personal gain, but for the benefit of the government which reposed in him its implicit confidence and asked in return such honesty of purpose, such nobility of intention as he had learned in the time-honored code of old West Point.

With these thoughts flashing through his mind, Douglas glanced through the other papers and noted the bids. Four were almost identical, ranging not more than \$1,000 from the amount appropriated, but the fifth firm offered to do the work for nearly \$50,000 less than any other.

Douglas turned over the paper and glanced at the name of the bidder—Jacobs, Sharp & Co., of San Francisco.

The door of the office gently opened and a well-dressed man walked to the desk, with outstretched hand.

"How do you do, Mr. Atwell?" he said suavely. "I hope you are enjoying this magnificent morning. It is certainly fine, isn't it?"

He had laid before Douglas a card bearing the inscription—"Stanhope Everett Westmoreland, Counsellor at Law," and now stood with hat in hand, his eyes searching the face of the young officer and noting with the keenness of attention peculiar to his kind all the papers that lay exposed to view on the top of the desk.

"I am happy to meet you, Mr. Westmoreland," said Douglas; "please be seated."

CHAPTER II

LIGHT ON THE BID OF JACOBS, SHARP & CO.

DOUGLAS pushed aside the papers which lay upon his desk and courteously waited for his visitor to announce the object of his call.

"Pardon my interest in the matter," said the latter seating himself close to the arm of the young officer's chair and sweeping the desk with his searching eyes, "but I note from your ring, and I know in fact personally, that you are a graduate of West Point."

"Yes," said Douglas, "Class of 19—."

"A great institution," said the visitor, nodding his head, "a great institution, turning out men with unlimited possibilities. All a young graduate needs is a little financial backing, a few good friends, and the ambition to succeed, and with his training nothing should stop him on his march to distinction. Command of the army, political distinction, even the presidency are available if he only knows how to play the game."

Mr. Westmoreland's face lit up with en-

thusiasm and his sparkling eyes measured Douglas from head to foot with an expression of admiring envy.

"You men of West Point," he went on, "do not realize your power—and your possibilities. But pardon me, Mr. Atwell, pardon me. I did not come to talk about West Point, but to talk about business."

Mr. Westmoreland leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily. "My enthusiasm about West Point and West Pointers makes me forget my profession sometimes. By the way, you played football at West Point, did you not, Mr. Atwell?" continued Mr. Westmoreland with some caution.

"Yes," said Douglas smiling. "I was on the team during the whole time I was at the Academy."

"I saw you make that great run at Philadelphia which won the game in 19—," replied Mr. Westmoreland, "the greatest run I ever saw in my life; and I saw you again the day your collar-bone was broken at Franklin Field, and your team lost. It nearly broke my heart."

Mr. Westmoreland's tone was kind in the ex-

treme, almost tender, and all Douglas Atwell's reserve and caution disappeared as he talked of the football games into which he had thrown all the energy and zeal of his strenuous cadet life.

Mr. Westmoreland had found the point of interest, and Douglas soon forgot the weighty matters which lay upon his desk as he talked on upon the theme, which, next to the battlefield, held his attention most keenly.

A half hour had passed when Mr. Westmoreland, with charming dexterity, turned the subject toward Douglas' later life, his present unusual status, and the duties of the office to which by the merest chance he had been assigned.

"You will have the handling of the big contract about which I read in the morning paper?"

"I opened the bids a few moments ago," replied Douglas carelessly, "but I presume the whole matter will be handled by the chief quartermaster."

"But no doubt you will be associated with your superior officer in the execution of this great enterprise?"

"Possibly," replied Douglas.

Mr. Westmoreland nodded musingly. "I hope so, I hope so. I feel sure that you will be interested in my connection with the subject in question. I represent the firm of Jacobs, Sharp & Co., whose bid for this undertaking no doubt you have already noticed."

Douglas straightened up in his chair, uncertain what to do. His lack of experience made it impossible for him to know whether he might engage this member of an interested firm in conversation about a bid which had not yet been accepted. He had indeed noticed the extraordinary bid of the firm of Jacobs, Sharp & Co., but was he at liberty to hear arguments by a representative in favor of his firm?

But Mr. Westmoreland was talking on. "No doubt the figures submitted by us are far below those submitted by any other bidder. We know the costs of materials, the cost of labor, and can figure the reasonable profit which any ordinary firm must demand for its efforts, but we are entering this field from a wholly different point of view. We want to do something for patriotism. We realize that

this great city will profit tremendously by the improvements resulting from our project, that the government will profit by it equally, while we are willing to await the lapse of years to yield us a small return on the money invested. Yes, we are willing to admit that our purpose is not wholly philanthropic, but we measure our returns by the benefit we bestow on a great community. In short, we have looked at this matter from a patriot's point of view, and the good fortune which has always followed you now throws you into a position to advance the interests of this enterprise—to make yourself the greatest benefactor of the western coast, and to identify yourself inseparably with a public utility which will help your military reputation more than thirty years' honorable and distinguished service. Yes, Mr. Atwell, here is the chance of a lifetime. I hope you will profit by it."

"The bids will be turned over to the chief quartermaster," said Douglas, "and of course it is needless to assure you that they will be treated impartially."

"That is all we desire, Mr. Atwell. That is eminently fair, but we submit a bid so much

better than that which any other firm can offer that we could hardly be treated impartially if that bid were rejected. You see it is this way, Mr. Atwell," and Mr. Westmoreland drew his chair up closer and glanced furtively toward the door.

"Our firm is looking for no great profits, but we stand ready to spend, the same as the other bidders concerned, the total sum of \$250,000 or even more. We will take this contract for \$200,000, and we will spend the balance—well—we don't exactly care how, don't you know?"

Douglas felt the hot blood mount to his cheeks and surge like hot flames to the roots of his hair. Up to this moment he had failed to understand the drift of Mr. Westmoreland's conversation. At last he grasped the situation. At last he realized the meaning of his visitor's reference to financial backing, good friends, the ambition to succeed, the political distinctions available. Mr. Westmoreland had set out to buy him.

Douglas rose from his chair. The slight chance that he might have misconstrued the intentions of his visitor restrained him from

prompt and vigorous action. He therefore said without the slightest show of anger, "I think this matter should be discussed only in the presence of all bidders for this contract and I will have to ask you to excuse me from further conversation upon the subject. I have nothing whatsoever to do with the letting of these contracts, and if I had I would be guided by just one consideration—the good of the service."

"I am delighted to hear your frank statement of principles, Mr. Atwell," said Mr. Westmoreland with perfect affability. "We are in perfect accord. I had in mind only the best interests of the service when I urged upon the firm a bid which amounts to giving the government \$50,000, but we will discuss this, as you say, before the other bidders," and Mr. Westmoreland thrust out his hand, a cordial smile lighting his ever watchful face.

Douglas could not decline the proffered courtesy, but Mr. Westmoreland was too well trained in the ways of the world to mistake the steel-like grip he received as evidence of cordiality. No lawyer of his day was better versed than he in the art of dissimulation,

and none knew better than he how to discover the weak spot in his victim and then to concentrate on that spot and win his case.

"And certainly love of money is not Mr. Atwell's weakness," mused he as he sauntered down the street toward his office. "The young idiot. He could make a start here which would land him a sure winner, but he flushes up like an indignant schoolgirl the moment he scents the bribe. I would drop him in a minute if there were any other way, but it is foolish to try to handle the old chief of the office. All we need is some good man like Atwell who is honest and who advocates this bid. He could get it accepted. When that happens we win. That bid is a masterpiece. It represents fifteen years of honest toil in the art of legal jugglery, and I drew it with my own hand. I am giving away \$50,000, but what is a few thousand in a game like this? Why, there are millions involved, and Atwell is the key to the situation. I've got to get him, no matter what it costs."

With eyes staring straight to the front, and teeth clenched on an unlighted cigar, Mr. Westmoreland, counsellor at law, stepped into

an elevator and shot up to the spacious office on the top floor of one of the great buildings of San Francisco.

He was perplexed, but not more so than the man whom he had left in the office of the chief quartermaster, for Douglas Atwell at the same moment was poring over the contracts on the desk before him, with something of the zeal which used to possess him when his company went forward to the assault of a Filipino trench.

What had impelled the firm of Jacobs, Sharp & Co. to submit a bid nearly \$50,000 less than the normal pay for such an undertaking?

Why had the firm seen fit to allow a legal sharp to reinforce this bid by the equivalent of a \$50,000 bribe?

Did Mr. Westmoreland really represent the firm in this effort to secure recognition of his bid?

Douglas had read all the other bids and was struggling through the legal phraseology of the one submitted by Jacobs, Sharp & Co., when the door opened again, and another visitor stood upon the threshold.

Douglas jumped up and advanced to meet the newcomer with outstretched hand.

"Hello, Benedict," said he heartily. "I am certainly glad to see you. I have been in this office just one hour and a half, and I am already in the midst of a legal tangle which I couldn't solve in one and a half centuries, but you are the boy to help me out. Sit down first and tell me the gossip. How did you get on with your last case?"

"Won it, and made a great start as a trust buster. It brought me into direct contact with the attorney-general's office, and I am unofficially following out some of the lines which that conviction exposed, and if I land this prize my fortune is made. But that is neither here nor there. What is it that is troubling you?"

"A bid for construction work valued at \$250,000. The chief quartermaster is ill to-day, and the major is away, so I had to open the bids submitted this morning. Four bidders propose doing the work for substantially the same sum—\$250,000, but the fifth proposed doing it for about \$200,000. The representative of the latter firm just left me

after talking an hour about the magnificent patriotism of his people in making this sacrifice for the benefit of the government, and, though he did not say so, I took it that he was willing to pay some one to see the thing through, irrespective of cost. The business looks crooked to me, but I have read the contract over a dozen times and cannot discover anything wrong in the wording. Will you please read it for me?"

"With pleasure," said Benedict.

"I suppose it is all right," said Atwell, hesitatingly. "A business man would proceed this way, and I am too ignorant of my duties to know whether this is right or wrong, but I must know what is back of this game if I can."

Benedict took the document and began reading hastily. Then he settled back into his chair, and his whole person expressed awakened interest. His teeth set, his eyes glistened, and his fine muscular frame seemed poised for action, just as Douglas had seen him as half-back for the Yale football team, eyes fixed upon the ball, and every muscle ready for a plunge against the opposing line

which seldom failed to break before his fearful attack. Douglas had measured strength and speed against him in one of the greatest games ever played on the old historic field at West Point; he had good evidence of the courage, zeal and pluck of his old time opponent, and each had for the other the respect which a skilful leader feels for an able enemy.

The qualities of leadership which had enabled Bob Benedict to win the football battles of old Eli had also won for him his present place among the legal fraternity of San Francisco and placed his name among those of the ablest lawyers of his time. Among his great gifts were the power of concentration and the appearance of it, and when that keen, alert expression of complete interest and absorption overspread his features nothing more was needed to apprise the observer of the fact that he had broken through the surface of legal phraseology and was pursuing the hidden thing within as a ferret pursues the flying rat.

"Well?" said Douglas as Benedict finished the paper.

Benedict squared his shoulders. "There is some chance," said he, "that I may be mis-

taken, but I believe that you have given me the clue to the identity of a crowd of grafters who have been able for ten years to defy all authority. That bid appears to lay the basis for the most gigantic piece of graft that has ever been attempted on the Pacific Coast. It was the very thing I was looking for. If I am right, this day brings my opportunity, which, as you know, comes but once in a lifetime. If I can get this thing before the district attorney in the proper way there can be no doubt but that we will score the greatest legal victory that this district has won over immoral politics in twenty-five years."

Benedict rose and walked up and down the office with his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

"But how does it happen that a bid for construction work in this department has anything to do with graft and local politics?" asked Douglas anxiously.

"Nothing on the surface of it," replied Benedict. "There is absolutely nothing corrupt in the government's part of this deal. That is manifest. No man on top of the earth would question the honesty of the chief of this

office. His reputation is known along the entire coast. The point about this bid is the way it is to be executed, and only one familiar with the inside facts would detect the object of the scheme. The chances of success for the bidders lies in using the honesty of the government to get through a dishonest scheme. Look at this."

Benedict drew from his pocket a large map of San Francisco and spread it upon the desk. Then with that wonderful attention to detail which had made him in turn the leader of his class, a great football player, and a thoroughly successful lawyer, Benedict pointed out the relation existing between the great railroad lines which converge on San Francisco, the surface systems, the ocean lines and the commercial prosperity of the community, and showed how this bit of construction work required by the Quartermaster's Department in the ordinary routine of business could be utilized by the firm of Jacobs, Sharp & Co., if backed by sufficient capital, to throw the control of the entire terminal system into the hands of a few men who would thus control the well-being of San Francisco as com-

pletely as Nero controlled the fate of ancient Rome. Only the method of getting at results differed. The effect was essentially the same.

It is needless to go into the details of this combination. Suffice it to say that the operations proposed by the bid of Jacobs, Sharp & Co. contemplated one of those daring acts of financial piracy so common in modern life, and quite as unscrupulous in its conception as any piratical undertaking conducted on the oceans of medieval days.

"The people behind this game," said Benedict, "have not hesitated to commit all the crimes necessary to accomplish their object, crimes of course which do not shock humanity by their barbarity, such as murder, arson, et cetera, but which are far more destructive of the life of a community than single acts of homicide. I intend to push a criminal prosecution against the leaders if the evidence can be obtained, but the peculiar thing about the situation is this," and Benedict fixed his searching gaze upon Douglas, "your testimony may be necessary in order to connect this proposition with the guilty parties. Are you willing to be drawn into the case?"

"Certainly," said Douglas without an instant's hesitation.

"And in order that you may fully understand the case, would you like to follow up the clue with me which has already developed?"

"Nothing would please me more," replied Douglas enthusiastically.

"Should the combination start in to make it hot for you and smash you up just as they have smashed up a thousand opponents before, will you stand pat and fight it out to the end?"

Douglas' eyes opened in surprise, and back to his mind came the feeling which had seized him upon receipt at Lieutenant Swayne's quarters of the letter detailing him on temporary duty in the office of the chief quartermaster. He had never hesitated before when he thought himself impelled to do a thing because it was right and fair; in his decisions he had never considered the consequences and he could not hesitate now. "No matter what these people may try to do, I will not hesitate to fight it out to the end," said Douglas, "if a fight be necessary. I cannot stop through fear of personal injury, and I will not stop

so long as what I am doing is perfectly honorable."

Benedict clasped him by the hand. "You don't know what it means to secure help of this kind," said he warmly. "The majority cower like yellow dogs at the first sign of dangerous and powerful opposition, but you are not one of the crowd. If this case goes to a prosecution, however, you will feel the power of combined capital as you never felt anything before. I assure you it is dangerous. Do you still go on?"

"Certainly," said Douglas. "I go on. I believe in the triumph of things that are fair and square, and I will act accordingly."

"Which being the case," said Benedict, "let us locate your morning visitor who found it necessary in the interest of patriotism to offer you a bribe of \$50,000 to let his scheme get through. What did you say his name was?"

"Stanhope Everett Westmoreland, Counsellor at Law," replied Douglas, glancing at the card upon his desk.

Benedict looked rapidly through the city directory, then tossed it back upon the desk with a loud burst of laughter.

"What is the joke?" asked Douglas smiling.

"There is no such name in the directory," replied Benedict, "neither does the name of Jacobs, Sharp & Co. appear of record. A new man and a new firm in San Francisco. This looks interesting to me, Atwell—very interesting."

CHAPTER III

A THEATER PARTY

WHEN Benedict left Lieutenant Atwell's office, the latter rose and paced up and down the room in deep perplexity. He was not given to fear or hesitation, and yet the dangers suggested by this fearless young lawyer, whose courage had been tried out on many a hard fought game on the gridiron, filled him with an anxiety he had never felt before. He could conceive no real basis for fear, but it is the unknown which terrifies. Many a brave soldier has valiantly faced a veritable storm of bullets in broad daylight, and yet has cowered and trembled at a sound in the darkness for which he could not account. But idle misgivings must not be allowed to sway his judgment. He resumed his seat and in a few moments was again absorbed in a study of the problem with which he had so suddenly been confronted.

The news that a second lieutenant was

"acting chief quartermaster" spread through the building, and one by one the officers dropped in and joked him on his suddenly acquired dignity, finally escorting him to the office of the commanding general of the department, who received him with his usual geniality.

The general remembered his name, congratulated him on his previous work and wished him equal success in his new field of endeavor; and, elated over the reception he had been accorded, Douglas returned to his desk.

He tried to remember the general's affability, and to forget the events of the morning, but it was useless. One picture was photographed upon his brain, and the image would not depart—that of Mr. Westmoreland as he sat painting his seductive picture of comfort, power, wealth and glory, all founded on corruption and dishonesty, and suggested so cautiously as to scarcely warrant open resentment.

Douglas mentally retraced the steps this man had used in approaching his goal—the glory of West Point, the game which always

awakened his interest, but how did Mr. Westmoreland come to know of his football record?

How did he happen to remember the famous run on Franklin Field and the breaking of his collar-bone?

Somewhere in the sea of faces which surrounded him as he was carried off the field, heart-broken over the loss of the game and writhing with pain, he seemed to vaguely remember one in the crowd which recalled the face of Mr. Stanhope Everett Westmoreland, but the recollection of these events was hazy and indefinite, and he could not call back the past and isolate the scene in which Mr. Westmoreland participated, if indeed their paths had ever crossed before.

Midday found the young officer still pondering over the strange occurrences of the morning, and endeavoring to map out a plan of action, but planning was useless. Nothing was definite. The next day might find him hundreds of miles away in the performance of some duty for the government, and years might elapse before he could return.

Douglas laughed at the magnificent bugbear his imagination had been building, seized his

hat and descended to look for a lunch room.

"Buy the Evening Post!" chirped a young voice as Douglas reached the door and saw himself "held up" by a bright lad of ten to twelve years who held out his wares for sale and solemnly waited response. His whole attitude created the impression that a purchase was absolutely necessary to further progress beyond the door and that the simplest solution for the situation was to buy and buy quickly.

"What is your name, my boy?" said Douglas, gazing down upon the curly red head, piercing blue eyes and freckled face, while he thrust his hand in his pocket to find the necessary tribute.

"My name's Roland McGrew," said the lad, cutting his eye toward a passer-by and deciding in that quick glance that he was no buyer.

"Why don't you go to school?" inquired Douglas, as he handed over his money and received the copy which he had no intention of reading.

"Can't," replied the boy, and raising his voice toward a prospective buyer he piped out

his call, "Evening Post! Buy the Evening Post!" But the "buyer," deep in thought, passed on, and back came Roland's frank, almost defiant gaze.

"I've got to support my mother and little sister. Evening Post! Buy the Evening Post!"

Douglas heard the statement with a little inward start. He too had to support a mother and "little" sister, but poor though he was, his income was regal as compared to the earnings of this little waif of the street. And yet here was one whose fight for life must be harder, whose struggle for meat and bread must be more desperate if the firm of Jacobs, Sharp & Co. were to prevail and the bid which lay in the safe above were to be accepted.

"Evening Post! Evening Post! Buy the Evening Post!"

The boy's keen eyes searched the street and he shifted his pack to ease a heavily burdened shoulder, but he paid no more heed to Douglas, who watched him nevertheless with keenest interest. Perhaps this bright-eyed little redhead could help solve the problem in which he and every waif of San Francisco

was keenly interested, though Roland McGrew did not know it.

"Have you been here all morning?" asked Douglas.

"Yes," replied Roland.

"Did you notice a man leaving the building about ten o'clock?"

"A guy with a light suit, Panama hat, and hair streaked with gray?"

"Exactly," said Douglas, delighted at the boy's facility for observation. "Do you know who he is?"

"No."

"Can you find out?"

"Yes." And Roland McGrew's inquiring blue eyes suggested that the service might be worth something though his lips were silent.

"Well, Roland," said Douglas, as he laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, "I want to know all about that fellow, and I want to know it soon. Do you understand?"

"All right, sir, I'll find out," replied the boy, and his steel-blue eyes for the first time lost their look of defiance and his tone and manner expressed deference and respect.

Douglas was absent at lunch for nearly an

hour, but when he approached the corner again he heard the same clear tones, "Evening Post! Buy the Evening Post!"

"Had your dinner, Roland?" he asked over his shoulder as he reached the door.

"No." The boy's eyes were staring straight up the street. The truth was he had had neither breakfast nor dinner, and if business did not improve there was not much prospect of a decent supper. He was making no appeal for sympathy, yet in some way his simple negative forcibly conveyed a sense of the distressing fact of his misery.

"Where do you live?" said Douglas quietly.

Without turning his eyes, Roland stated the street and number, the very center of the poor district where poverty stalked hand in hand with vice, where life was a perpetual struggle in which only the fittest for battle could survive. Here in an environment of violence and crime, little Roland McGrew must "support his mother and little sister."

"You'd better get your lunch, Roland," said Douglas, and he thrust a coin into the boy's hand.

When Douglas reëntered his office the desk was stacked high with the midday mail, but among the long official envelopes his quick eye caught the shimmer of a dainty social note. The mass of correspondence was tumbled aside, the gently scented missive was opened in an instant and the rapidly rising color of the recipient indicated that he was somehow deeply interested in the contents.

"MY DEAR MR. ATWELL," ran the note.

"Mrs. Swayne has agreed to chaperon a little theater party to-night. An old friend of mine is to be with me, and your sister has agreed to come.

"Call me up by 'phone and tell me that you can come. Please join us at the Swaynes' and we will all go down in the auto.

"Most cordially,

"ALICE DRYDEN."

Douglas laid aside the note with a gesture of impatience. The mental picture of the poverty and suffering which surrounded the home of little Roland McGrew and thousands of his kind was still fresh in his mind, and there was something incongruous, almost of-

fensive, in fact, in the sudden transition to the atmosphere of wealth, of pleasure, and even of extravagance.

"Of course I cannot accept the invitation," mused Douglas as he tore open the rest of the envelopes and examined the contents. It required the work of but a few moments to attend to the business which he felt at liberty to handle. The chief clerk had dextrously relieved him throughout the day of everything that called for a decision and had withheld all business even which required a signature. So it happened that in less than half an hour the desk was clear of everything except that irritating invitation to a theater party.

Douglas took up the note and read it again. The emotions aroused by his talk with little Roland McGrew were subsiding and the longing for pleasure and happiness natural to youth was again asserting itself.

Friendliness was expressed in every line of the little missive, a wealth of friendliness lurked between the lines, and called him to come and enjoy himself.

"But how can I accept these favors?" thought he. "I am unable to return her

hospitality, and I should not therefore accept it. We meet in these little social affairs, but her world and mine are as completely separated as Jupiter and Mars, and it is the part of wisdom to recognize it. Only unhappiness could result from any other course. How could she understand or sympathize with little Roland McGrew, with his torn trousers and dirty, tattered shoes; how could she for that matter understand the circumstances of my own early life or appreciate the struggle for existence through which I have passed?"

Douglas gazed out of the window across the housetops of the great city of San Francisco, but what he saw was the shining slopes of the Shawangunk Mountains in eastern New York where he had spent his childhood. He saw the little house where he was born, with its warped roof and rickety barn, scarce housing enough to feed the cattle through the fearful winters which swept the mountainside. In summer they grazed in the lowlands where Douglas, hatless, in scant and tattered garments, his bare feet torn by the brush and briar through which he roamed, herded his flock. From the very earth he had absorbed the

thoughts of his childhood, and, living the hardy life of a young savage, he grew up struggling for mastery over the almost insurmountable obstacles which surrounded him.

The recollection of those days of suffering was among the most cherished moments of Douglas' life. They constituted his claim to nobility because he had survived them. He had prized his independence of thought, his freedom from sycophancy. He could not abandon his standards now. Others might beg the privilege of Alice Dryden's company, might rejoice in the chance of riding in her car, of being identified as her friend in public. If she desired his company, however, she must seek it; this much she had already done, but nothing in their future relations could be permitted to change the situation. He must so conduct himself that no act of his could be interpreted as an effort to change into a deeper emotion the friendship which had heretofore existed. With this as the guiding premise, could he accept the invitation to the theater party to-night, and thus place himself under a social obligation which he could ill afford to return?

The gentle tinkle of the telephone bell made him start, and he quickly thrust Alice Dryden's note into his pocket as if caught in the possession of goods he would like to conceal.

"Hello!"

"Yes, this is Mr. Atwell."

"Oh, Miss Dryden. I am glad to—to see you. I——"

"Yes, yes, I received your note, and thank you very much indeed for your kind invitation, but——"

"What! a surprise for me?"

"Can't you tell me who it is?"

"When I see you to-night?"

"No—no, I think there is nothing to prevent my coming."

"At 7:45 this evening. All right, I will be delighted to come. Good-bye."

Douglas put up the receiver with a bang, and though he had been talking but a moment, there was evidence of perspiration on his lips and forehead. This girl had handled him on the end of the wire as a dextrous prestidigitateur handles the utensils of his trade. In spite of his revulsion of feeling at the extravagance and luxury involved in this

costly visit to the theater, in spite of his deep apprehension that he was making a mistake in placing himself under social obligations to this charming daughter of a very rich family, yet he had not only accepted, but had said he would be delighted to come.

But the thing was done. No half measures could be tolerated now. He called his home on the telephone and informed his sister that he had accepted, and then spent the rest of the afternoon waiting for the termination of office hours.

The big contracts which had been consigned to the safe, the strange visit of Mr. Westmoreland, and the troubles of Roland McGrew were forgotten, and in high spirits Douglas reached his home and went down to dinner.

"Trudes" was more than delighted ; she was radiant. Fresh from college and inexperienced in the ways of the great world she looked upon this, her first big social affair, as an epoch-making event.

Such had been the simplicity of her early life in her poor country home that the smallest diversion possessed the power to amuse and en-

tain, and the sweetness and naïveté of her manner won for her many friends wherever she went.

As Douglas listened to her enthusiastic chatter, and noted the finish and taste of her "latest gown," he realized that "little sis" was no longer the little lonely playmate whom he had left in the Shawangunks when he left home to join the army in the Philippines; that the sad, wistful face had developed in strength and beauty, and that she now stood on the threshold of young womanhood an unusually attractive and charming personality.

Her evening dress, cut in the latest style, set off to advantage the unblemished whiteness of her skin, but her crowning glory was her hair. The "tow head" which used to catch the burrs and thistles along the heather was now a mass of gold which rose in graceful waves from her forehead and shimmered beneath the light over the dining-room table.

Silent but interested, Mrs. Atwell listened to her two children as the meal passed, and then, on the arm of "her boy," went to her room, while Douglas dressed for the affair of the evening.

At 7:45 P. M. sharp a big tourist automobile rolled up to the door, "onk-onking" its notice of arrival, and Douglas and Gertrude at once stepped out to meet it.

Two persons awaited them upon the sidewalk, and a voice full of cordiality greeted their approach.

"Lieutenant Douglas Atwell, I believe?"

"Rory O'Connor!" exclaimed Douglas as he seized his good friend by the hand and almost hugged him with delight. "So you are the surprise. I can't thank you too much, Miss Dryden, for this pleasure; but here, Rory, I am so excited over you I am forgetting everything else. Let me introduce you to my sister," and Douglas presented Gertrude to "the best friend any man ever had."

Rory was not slow in taking advantage of the situation. Before any one could foresee the object of his maneuver, he had placed Douglas and Alice together, had seated himself beside Gertrude, and had instructed the chauffeur to run down to the Swaynes'. He was master of ceremonies at once. No one but he was allowed to stir when the car rolled up to the front of Lieutenant Swayne's quar-

ters, and in a few moments the whole party, in high spirits, was off to the theater.

It is needless to say that Rory maintained control of the situation when the theater was reached. He knew just where the box was located, and with the ease and finish which Douglas had always so much admired, he seated the group so that all were well pleased, and Douglas and Alice were still together in the front seats of the best box in the house.

Roderick was all attention to Gertrude, while Mr. and Mrs. Swayne were happily seated in the chaperon's row, where they were cautioned to "carefully observe the young people in front."

The curtain arose a few moments after the arrival of the party and Douglas soon found his attention keenly fixed upon a play of unusual merit which, strange to say, was able to hold the public interest on the very theme which was uppermost in his mind—the relation of the masses to the financial despotism of the few.

The power of wealth and the unscrupulous disregard of the manipulators thereof to the welfare of the people were depicted with a

power which drove the lesson home to Douglas in a manner never to be forgotten, and inspired in him a fierce desire to contribute his little share to the effort to preserve to the people their little remaining power to survive the struggle for existence.

His fingers were gripping the arms of his chair, and his chest was heaving with the strong impulse within him when the curtain descended upon a thrilling scene, and the voice of his fair companion brought him back to his surroundings.

"You like the play, Mr. Atwell?"

"Very much indeed," he replied. "It is certainly a very powerful presentation of our present day problem, and interests me intensely."

"But you don't think it is true to life, do you?"

She was reclining in her chair in that attitude of supreme comfort which so few people can successfully assume. Her position had permitted her the opportunity to note the emotions which the play had inspired in Douglas, and the slight smile of incredulity which parted her lips suggested to him that



"I THINK IT IS TRUE"

the feelings, so plainly expressed in his set face, were giving her no little amusement.

"Yes, I think it is true to life," said Douglas emphatically. "We do not see these tragedies enacted in every-day life, and the processes are slower in their operation perhaps than is indicated by the play, but the scenes just presented have their counterpart right here in the business operations of San Francisco, though they are obscured by the millions of other events which constantly attract the attention. The germs of typhoid, of small-pox, and of leprosy are destroying millions annually, yet the agent of all this destruction can be revealed only by the microscope. The disease which the playwright is exposing tonight is no less real because we are not constantly confronted with its effects. Yes indeed, I feel keenly that the play is true to life."

Alice smiled. "I like to hear your opinions," she said sweetly, "even though I may disagree with you."

"Do you disagree in this case?"

Alice hesitated. "Yes," she said, "I think the play is simply a clever handling of a

fiction to catch the popular fancy, and improve the box office receipts. I do not believe the writer is any more in earnest than the players who are simply acting, not living their parts, and this for the pay it brings."

"Of course," said Douglas, "the actors are only playing, the playwright is only putting his feelings on paper, not suffering the evils he depicts, and all are doing this for pay; but what has caused this theater to be packed to the doors and filled from parquet to roof? The people, most of them at least, are drawn here because the situation is real to them, and they want a solution. It is the business of every honest person to so handle the daily affairs about him as to prevent the people from resorting to the solution adopted by the revolutionists of France. Some very precious blood might be spilled if they did."

"I love to hear you talk," said Alice with sparkling eyes.

"Though you still disagree with me?"

She nodded hesitatingly, but her gaze was sweeping the great assemblage, and especially the dense mass that filled the upper gallery, and waited eagerly for the curtain to rise on

the next chapter of the theme built about their humble homes.

"I think the mass of the people are poor," she said slowly, "because they are unfit for anything else. If reforms are needed, they should start with them, and not with the people who have attained success through industry."

The hot blood rushed to Douglas Atwell's face as the thoughts of his own childhood came back to him just as they had come to him in his office when he hesitated at accepting Alice Dryden's invitation.

They were hopelessly at variance in all their feelings, he thought, and nothing could harmonize them, and with eyes gazing straight to the front to conceal his feelings, he silently vowed that he would never again be drawn into a discussion of the subject.

Down the aisle in front came a small figure, and something in the tone startled the young officer as he heard, "Photos! Photos of the leading actors!"

So this was how Roland McGrew labored into the night to "support his mother and little sister."

Douglas returned the boy's gaze with a friendly nod, and then with an almost imperceptible motion of the head, Roland McGrew drew his attention across the theater.

There, surrounded by a most distinguished looking group of friends who had made their success by "industry," Stanhope Everett Westmoreland was taking his seat in the opposite box.

CHAPTER IV

DOUGLAS RECEIVES A STRANGE LETTER

THE clarion tones of Roland McGrew's chant were ringing through the street when Lieutenant Douglas arrived next morning at the door of the Phelan Building in San Francisco.

Though it was close to midnight when the boy had reached his miserable home, yet the first gray streak of dawn which found its way into his room stirred him again to activity and to the drudgery of fighting on alone against such tremendous odds. The cold raw morning air chilled him to the bone as he slipped into the street and turned toward the newspaper office, but the grim philosophy which comes to the fighter for life sustained him and enabled him to endure the pangs of hunger which would have driven many a boy similarly placed to fling defiance at the law and steal what he needed.

It was no new experience to Roland

begin his day's work without breakfast. His mother, crippled by rheumatism and other ills, was unable to cook it, and his little sister was too young. If Roland awoke early enough he prepared his own scanty meal ; if not, he went hungry, for he could not afford, even for one morning, to abandon the field to his competitors, thus sacrificing his control of the trade of the street and with it the scant income which supported his family.

There was no spirit of submission, no lack of courage in Roland's tones, however, as he rang out his familiar call to all the street, "Morning papers."

"Good-morning, Roland," said Douglas. "Let me have the morning paper."

Roland handed out the paper with alacrity, received his pay, and was about to turn away, when Douglas asked, "How did you manage to locate Mr. Westmoreland last night?"

"It was easy," replied Roland. "I picked him up in the street last night and followed him to his home ; he lives at No. — Pine Street, and from some of the newsboys who work that section, I found out where his office is—top floor of the ——— building, big office

with a lot of partners, but I didn't find out who they were. I'll get that to-day from an office boy on the same floor; he's a chum of mine. Later I found out that Mr. Westmoreland hangs out all winter in the lobby of the legislature, and buys up political jobs. I had one of my chums keep track of him last night when I went over to the theater for night work, and so I knew when he came in, and put you wise. I suppose you caught on?"

Douglas nodded. "Did you find out what Mr. Westmoreland is doing now?"

"No, but it's a cinch it's crooked," replied Roland emphatically.

Douglas settled his account with Roland temporarily, asked him to keep track of Westmoreland and report his whereabouts, and then with a pat on the boy's shoulder he ascended to his office.

It was still early. The clerks were beginning to assemble, and as Douglas looked along the extensive line of desks he ardently hoped that the chief might come down and relieve him of the nominal duty but most abnormal responsibility which had been thrust upon him.

As if in response to his wish the door swung open and the chief walked in.

"How are you, Mr. Atwell?" said he cordially, as he extended his hand. "I hope you had an interesting time yesterday."

"Very interesting indeed," said Douglas. "I hope you do not have many like it."

"What—what happened?" asked the chief in surprise.

Douglas informed him of the arrival of the bids, the amounts involved in the group of four, and the strange difference proposed by the firm of "Jacobs, Sharp & Co."; also of the visit of Mr. Westmoreland with his implied offer of a \$50,000 bribe to secure the acceptance of his bid.

"The same old story," said the chief quartermaster. "Graft, graft, graft. The old bidders know better than to present their corrupt schemes, but the new ones all have to learn that we cannot be bought. It staggers one to think of the conditions under which business must be transacted when it is found that pretty nearly every bidder who comes before us takes it for granted that he must buy his way to favorable consideration.

"It is business, they say, and must be recognized. One of the few consolations an officer feels at the end of a long life of arduous toil is this: he has been free from the necessity of buying preference. He can be perfectly honest, and his ultimate success depends upon his reputation for clean-cut unflinching honesty and truthfulness.

"I presume you let Mr. Westmoreland know where we stood?"

"His offer was so veiled that I could not take it for granted that he intended to bribe me, but I assured him that his bid would receive fair and impartial consideration, which, of course, was the last thing in the world he wanted. I did not fully appreciate the effect of his proposal, but while I was examining the bids Mr. Benedict came in and I consulted him. This is what he pointed out." Douglas spread out on the table the map which Benedict had left with him, and rapidly indicated the possibilities involved in the giant scheme which the firm of Jacobs, Sharp & Co. had attempted to foist upon the people of San Francisco.

The chief quartermaster gazed at him in

blank astonishment. Never in all his experience with unscrupulous contractors, designing builders, horse dealers, and mule venders had he been confronted with a plan so wilfully dishonest, so cunningly conceived to squeeze money from the victims of the plot, regardless of the consequences involved.

"The information which Benedict read between the lines will help him, he thinks, to prosecute the conspirators," continued Douglas, "and he has asked me to testify in regard to the presentation of this bid and the attempt to bribe me should my testimony become necessary. I agreed to do so and will, if there is no official objection."

"None," said the chief quartermaster, "so far as I know. I see no reason why you should not assist him to the limit of your power. I hope you may be able to send the conspirators to prison. Do it if you can, so far as I am concerned."

"Thank you, sir," said Douglas. "I'll go ahead."

It was the authority he needed to permit him to pursue the case to its logical conclusion.

"That being settled," continued the chief quartermaster, "let us take up the next piece of business. I suppose you would like to know why you are on duty in this office. Well, I happened to learn of your ability as a draftsman, and having to work out extensive plans for barracks and quarters and public buildings in this department, I decided to secure your services. This big room here is filled with drawings. Here is a list. Please get them into order and then we will talk the matter over with the plans before us."

Douglas entered the room at once and took up his task, little dreaming that in the curled up maps and dusty charts lay the information which would soon be as valuable to him as his very life. All day long he plodded over the weary details, noted the water system, the various supply centers, the poor district and the business section in which the tremendous wealth of the city lay concentrated. At the close of office hours he had a mental picture of the whole so clear and precise that he could have reproduced every essential detail of the map from unaided memory. The magnitude and character of his work were clear to

him now, but it was too late to consult his chief. He laid aside his work and descended to the street.

Roland McGrew was not at the door and his clear bell-like call could be heard nowhere in the street. The balmy air of spring time filled his lungs and brought the flush of health to his cheeks as Douglas struck out through the streets for a walk to the boat landing.

He had gone only a block when Roland McGrew emerged from a side street with a bundle of papers beneath his arm.

"Hello, Roland," said Douglas, reaching for a copy of the evening paper. "Have you any news?"

"Yes; Mr. Westmoreland has left town. The office boys don't know where he has gone, but he left to-day. I went to the office with a fake message, but they told me Mr. Westmoreland had left no address. I thought you would like to know."

"Yes, indeed, I am glad to hear of it, Roland. Keep your scouts out and let me know everything that turns up."

Douglas glanced over the head-lines, and then in opening the folds of the paper to look

for the athletic news, his eye caught the staring announcement —

GREAT CONTRACT LET TO SAN
FRANCISCO FIRM

Captain Atwell, Acting Chief Quartermaster, favors plan for big municipal improvement. Talented officer, etc., etc.

Then followed an account as eulogistic as it was false and inaccurate of "Captain Atwell's" attainments as constructing quartermaster and his views upon the needs of the department. Without making any positive assertions, the whole article conveyed the impression that the matter had been settled and that "Captain Atwell" had made a most brilliant and praiseworthy decision. The lucky firm, however, was not mentioned.

Douglas read the trash to the end, thrust the paper into his pocket, and turned away with a shudder of disgust. Clearly this was the first step undertaken by Mr. Westmoreland to force acceptance of his bid, but of course there was nothing to prove that he had inspired the article in the evening paper, and

any effort to hold the paper responsible, or to discover and chastise the reporter who had written it would be exceedingly unwise.

However much the spirit might chafe under the lash of the unscrupulous distorters of the facts, it was absolutely necessary to maintain a dignified silence and refrain from retaliatory measures. So engrossed was he with his thoughts as he turned abruptly around a corner that he almost collided with a gentleman who was walking from the door of one of the great business houses toward the street. A momentary halt occurred on the part of both, and Douglas found himself face to face with Mr. Dryden.

"How do you do, Mr. Atwell?" said the latter, extending his hand. "I haven't had the pleasure of seeing you since the night of your graduation dinner at Murray Hill Hotel, New York. I have followed your career ever since with a great deal of interest, and note that you are justifying expectations. I congratulate you on your good work."

"Thank you, sir," said Douglas, and as his eyes looked past Mr. Dryden he saw Alice, smiling and radiant, seated in the big auto-

mobile where she waited for her father to join her.

"We are going out for an hour's spin before dinner," said Mr. Dryden, taking Douglas by the arm; "won't you join us? I will let you off at the landing for the boats which cross to the Fort."

Mr. Dryden was pressing him toward the open door of the auto, and there seemed no possible justification for declining the proffered courtesy. In a moment he was seated beside Alice with Mr. Dryden in the front seat.

Out into the park sped the machine and the soft breath of spring time perfumed with the fragrance of the budding woodland swept into the faces of the young couple.

It is impossible to resist the feeling of pleasure and happiness which such surroundings induce, and the fiery anger which had been surging through the young officer was rapidly leaving him.

"You seemed to be worried, Mr. Atwell, when you turned that corner and nearly ran down daddy in the street. I hope you are not—disturbed over anything."

"I was somewhat disturbed," said Douglas,

"but regret I showed it so plainly as to reveal it to every one in the street."

"Perhaps not every one would have noticed it," said Alice cautiously. "I wondered why you were worried."

"Just a trifle," replied Douglas evasively.

"But men of your stamp are not worried by trifles—are they?"

For some reason Alice was determined to have a confession, and Douglas was the last person in the world to discover the reason. Whenever a woman compels a man to confide in her, even in a trifling matter, she thereby acquires an advantage over him, and from the day of her first meeting with Douglas Atwell this charming daughter of Eve had felt a desire to master him which she had never been able to gratify. He was interesting and exasperating because she could not conquer him. Her wealth seemed powerless to attract; he appeared to avoid rather than to seek her company—an intolerable situation which must not be endured, and here was an opportunity to compel his submission in a trifling matter and thus lay the foundations for a more complete mastery.

"Perhaps the matter was not a trifle," replied Douglas in self-defense, and seeing no need for concealment he added, "A notice in the evening paper which misrepresented me caused my annoyance."

"The reference to your success as a quartermaster?"

"Yes."

"I read it, and I thought it was very complimentary."

"It was very complimentary, fulsome, in fact, and false clear through. I would rather be criticized, falsely at that."

Alice raised her brows in surprise. "I thought every one liked praise."

"Not I, unless I merit the praise. In this case I merit nothing."

"But it was a compliment to you to select you for the work in the chief quartermaster's office, was it not?"

"Yes," said Douglas, "somewhat of a compliment."

"To be concerned in undertakings so great is—an honor?"

"Yes," said Douglas, "and I appreciate it fully, but the article wholly misrepresents

me," he continued, unwilling to go into details. "All the honors for that office must go to the chief quartermaster. I am only a very young assistant."

"But still an assistant," said Mr. Dryden, smiling. "At any rate your work is attracting favorable notice, though reporters falsify to make a good story and help out their copy. Not all young men are anxious to work and eager to succeed by means of work alone. Why, Mr. Atwell, the business men of the world are in a perpetual search for men of ability who are willing and able to perform the work of their establishments, but the search is never ended. If a man can and will do a piece of work better than any of his associates, the world will build a road to his door-step even though he reside in the heart of a forest. That is the approximate language of a renowned saying; you gather the meaning, though it is badly expressed. This article is a very clumsy attempt at recognizing that you have a way of doing things that must ultimately bring success."

"Thank you," said Douglas gratefully. "I deeply appreciate the compliment, though I

cannot think it is merited. I am merely trying to do plain duties in a plain, simple way, and I may do it in this instance in such a way as to change the opinion of the reporter who has attempted to praise me."

Mr. Dryden raised his eyebrows, nodded and smiled. The machine was slowing up near the landing for boats which ply between San Francisco and Fort McDowell.

"We will be glad to see you at the hotel whenever you find it possible to come, Mr. Atwell," said Mr. Dryden, as Douglas stepped down. "As I am absent on business nearly all the time Alice is lonesome here, and will be grateful for your company."

Alice was looking straight to the front, with her shapely chin slightly protruding in silent protest. To be rated as "grateful" for the boon of any one's companionship was intolerable to her, who from childhood had been accustomed to believe all her associates "grateful" for the privilege of her company. Daddy's mistake must be corrected at once.

"I saw Mr. O'Connor this morning, and asked him to come see me—and your sister, and Mr. and Mrs. Swayne and Bobby, of

course. Papa wished to extend the invitation to you also. We hope we shall see you often."

"I shall be glad to come—as one of the group, of course," and again Alice felt the dominating position which this penniless lieutenant assumed toward her. He was not grateful for the opportunity of seeing her; he was barely willing to be grouped in the class invited to call, and upon every meeting it was she, not he, who sought a continuance of the acquaintanceship.

How annoying! And as the machine sped away along the magnificent drives of the city Alice instinctively reached forward and drew the hand-glass from its place. Yes, there was her hat, the perfection of the milliner's art, poised gracefully upon her shapely head; there beneath the bewitching veil were the curls nestling above her fine forehead; there, in fact, were all the charms which, together with her wealth, had won for her a position of recognized supremacy among the young women of her class, yet this boy from the farm stood on a pinnacle, and by his every attitude proclaimed himself her superior. How absurd!

While the occupants of the luxurious machine, busy with their thoughts, sped rapidly toward the most expensive hotel in San Francisco, Lieutenant Douglas Atwell, the boy from the farm and graduate of the Military Academy, walked up the line of officers' quarters to his simple home, pondering over the interest Mr. Dryden had taken in his career. It was true that Mr. Dryden knew of his service in the Philippines, that Rory O'Connor, a lifelong friend of the Dryden family, never ceased to proclaim the ability and achievements of his former roommate and classmate at the Academy, but this did not seem sufficient to attract such close attention from a man of affairs such as Mr. Dryden appeared to be. Whatever might be the reason, there seemed to be no doubt that Lieutenant Atwell had won the esteem of this leader of finance.

The thoughts of the young officer upon the subject were interrupted by the peal of the bugles sounding assembly for the first parade of the season. A moment later Douglas mounted the steps of his porch, where Rory O'Connor and Gertrude were seated together

to witness the spectacle on the big parade-ground in front of officers' quarters.

"A lot of mail for you in your room, Douglas," said Gertrude patting her big "brod" on the back, and Douglas at once went to his room, determined to know the contents of the letters before joining Rory and his sister upon the porch.

Upon his chiffonier lay the pile—"The Army and Navy Journal," a service magazine, letters from some friends, and an official-looking envelope neatly typewritten and carefully addressed.

Douglas tore it open. It contained a single blank sheet of white paper enclosing a check drawn on one of the great banking houses of San Francisco, and reading:

"Pay to the order of Lieutenant Douglas Atwell, U. S. Army . . . \$25,000.00."

The signature of the drawer was a complex mixture of lines and letters which conveyed not the slightest meaning to the startled recipient.

CHAPTER V

A MIDNIGHT VISITOR

THERE could scarcely be any doubt that the check received by Douglas Atwell in the mail was the first installment of the \$50,000 bribe by which Mr. Westmoreland believed he could coax or force acceptance of the bid submitted by the firm of Jacobs, Sharp & Co. In the creed to which he had subscribed from youth there was but one standard article of faith—every man has his price. He had rated Douglas Atwell high, but he was playing for stakes so large that \$25,000 was but a trifle. He could pay five times that amount and yet not embarrass the expense account of the firms for which he operated. But the corollary to his article of faith prescribed economy in making purchases—"Buy your man as cheaply as possible."

Douglas gazed contemptuously at this mute evidence of human weakness and crime.

How simple this counselor at law must be to think that he could induce a man of keen mind whose existence did not depend on the tyranny of "interests" to consent to a plan for imposing on the people of San Francisco a burden under which they would groan, not for a day or a week or a month, but as long as grass would grow and water would run—a burden which would ultimately crush such strugglers for life as Roland McGrew and force them to choose between crime and starvation.

Douglas' first instinct was to tear up the check and fling it into the waste paper basket. His next to find Mr. Westmoreland, tear it up in his presence and actually make him eat the pieces ; but he wisely desisted from either.

The first plan was unwise because the man who sent the check must be found, and in the presence of witnesses must be forced to acknowledge that it was not accepted, and the second plan was impossible of execution because Mr. Westmoreland, as Roland McGrew had already reported, had wisely left town, and his whereabouts were unknown.

What was to be done under the circumstances ?

As Douglas stood pondering on the course to follow, the adjutant's call sounded loud and clear on the parade in front of his quarters, and he flung the letter into a drawer, locked the bureau carefully, and descended to the porch.

"Did you get the registered letter which I left on your chiffonier?" asked Gertrude.

"Registered?" said Douglas in surprise.

"Yes; the big letter with a seal and with typewritten address."

"Oh, yes—yes," said Douglas, starting, and for the first time he realized that the envelope bore the marks of registration.

"I was anxious," said Gertrude, "because I signed for it when it came, knowing that you would be home at about this hour. Did it contain anything of importance?"

Douglas shifted, and the color left his face. A realization of the position in which this arch trader in men's lives had placed him was beginning to dawn upon his mind. His sister's name had been coupled with his own in the official reception of a letter containing a \$25,000 bribe.

The crashing music of the band enabled

Douglas to evade further questions, and the interest of all three was soon centered on the spectacle on the parade-ground in front.

Roderick was enjoying a short leave, and as Douglas was on detached service, both might be quiet spectators of a function in which they had so many times participated as cadets in the same company at West Point. Since the great day on which they had left the old Academy, fortune had carried them to widely separated fields. Roderick, although a star graduate and entitled to assignment to the engineer corps, had chosen to cast his lot with the line and to share the fate of the infantry, the solid backbone of the army. Perhaps association with Douglas had influenced his choice, for the latter's narratives of service in the Philippines had created a desire to march with the great column of rifles, to share the pains and know the power, to feel the suffering and participate in the glory of the soldiers who decide the fate of every battle-field—the infantrymen.

As yet no opportunity had come to Roderick to fight for his country, but every day of his service increased his confidence in the arm he

had chosen, and confirmed his faith in the supremacy of the rifleman.

"The makers of history, the salvation of the republic," said he to Douglas, his eyes fixed on the solid ranks standing mute and quiet as statuary, arms at the order.

Douglas nodded, and as the band played, the bugles sounded, and the solid ranks marched to the inspiring strains of martial music the two friends talked of their experience and Gertrude listened with rapt attention to her "wonderful" brother and his equally "wonderful" comrade in arms.

Rory accepted an urgent invitation to remain for the night, and after a quiet dinner with the little family, Swayne with his bride and Bobby MacGregor were called on the 'phone and asked to come over for the evening.

All responded with delight and a half hour after dinner the parlor was filled with a happy, noisy group.

The unwelcome letter which lay concealed in an up-stairs drawer was forgotten, the serious consequences which might result from the plot to secure acceptance of the bid of

Jacobs, Sharp & Co. were ignored, and Douglas was a boy again with his close and trustworthy friends.

Gertrude had been at home from college but a short time, and only that day Douglas had found it practicable on his slender salary to place a piano in the parlor for the benefit of Gertrude's friends who were now habitual callers. Douglas knew that she had developed some talent while away from home, but as yet he was ignorant of her true ability. He had never heard her sing or play. His surprise was keen, therefore, and his delight unmeasured when he beheld her seated at the new piano, convulsing her friends with comic songs and stirring them with the love ballads and folk songs of bygone days.

Her voice lacked the richness and power of Alice Dryden's, but her winsomeness and art of mimicry were unsurpassed. She possessed the gift of singing directly to her hearers. Whoever fell within the range of her sparkling eyes felt that her smile was for him, her song for him, that of all persons in the world he alone inspired the mirth, the coquetry or the gallantry of the theme, and perhaps no one

enjoyed the performance so much as Roderick O'Connor. He maneuvered Bobby from the favored chair at the corner of the piano and devoted himself to the pretty little singer until Mrs. Swayne decided it was absolutely necessary "to take Rory away, before he attempts to tell the story of his young life and to ask for a photo."

"I think we better have something at which more than two can play," suggested Bobby in despair.

Gertrude closed the piano and all repaired to the kitchen. A few lemons were found, some cake, a half loaf of bread, some sardines and a dish of potato salad. All was complete except the mayonnaise sauce, which Bobby MacGregor agreed to make. Everybody helped, and somehow Bobby manufactured the finished product, and with plate in hand each member of the party filed out to the dining-room and sat down to a pleasant little repast. Bobby and Rory entertained the company with side-splitting stories of their cadet adventures, and after washing the dishes, the party broke up in high good humor at 11 P. M.

Douglas and Rory bade the family good-

night and retired to their room. Then the subject which weighed so heavily on our young friend's mind demanded utterance, and he unlocked the drawer, drew out the check from its safe hiding place, and laid it before his friend and classmate. History was repeating itself. During the four eventful years of his life at the Military Academy Douglas had frequently been forced to turn to Roderick, his brilliant classmate, for advice and counsel, and with equal eagerness he sought the help of his more gifted associate in this emergency.

"Where in the name of all that is sacred did you get this?" exclaimed Roderick as he noted the amount written across the face of the check. "Have you been robbing a bank?"

"No," said Douglas, "a bank seems to be trying to buy me for the purpose of robbing the government. Listen to my story."

Douglas drew from the drawer the maps, notes and sketches which pertained to the subject, and laid them on the table. Clearly and concisely he narrated the story of his detail in the office of the chief quartermaster, the opening of the bids, the visit of Mr. Westmoreland

to his office, and the pledge he had given to Benedict to assist him regardless of consequences should his assistance be necessary in the prosecution of some big interests which Benedict thought were behind this scheme to rob the city of millions.

"I did not believe him when he said that the situation might become dangerous for me, but when I bought the evening paper this thing caught my eye. Look."

Douglas pushed the copy of the evening paper across the table to Rory, who read with puzzled face.

"I am unable to see anything in this," said Rory, "except a very badly garbled story by a very cheap reporter who probably thinks he is making a scoop."

"But when I arrived, as you remember, I found waiting for me this registered letter containing a check for \$25,000; don't you see the connection?"

"Somebody must have given the story to the reporter to prepare the public mind," continued Douglas, "and the same person at the same time must have sent me this check. Whoever sent it has taken care to secure an

official acknowledgment that I received the communication."

"I see," said Rory. "You stand convicted as a grafter, and unless you see that the bid is accepted, the firm behind this steal will show you up in the press as a bleeder of honest business men."

"That seems to be the unpleasant truth, and, worst of all, Gertrude signed for the letter."

Rory nodded. "We will have to handle the case so as to keep her name completely out of it. No doubt it was planned to have the letter arrive during your absence from home so as to involve your family in the hope of intimidating you. It is often just as embarrassing to be accused of an offense as it is to be guilty of the offense, and these people thoroughly know the game. The question is, with what weapons should we fight them?"

"How would it do to employ their own tactics? To call up the Associated Press and give them the full details and let the check be copied and the whole thing exposed in the morning papers?"

"And what would you expose?"

"Westmoreland."

"What can you prove that he has done? He avoided actually offering you a bribe, you say; there were no witnesses to your conversation, and there is absolutely nothing to show that he sent you this check. The signature is unreadable, but it certainly bears no resemblance to the name of your dear friend, Westmoreland."

"Who had the good taste to leave town," said Douglas.

"How do you know that?"

Douglas related the story of Roland McGrew's connection with the case, and how the boy had kept him informed of the whereabouts of Mr. Westmoreland.

"He can be of great service to us," said Rory. "We can do nothing until we know who signed that check, and then I think you will be forced to prosecute with vigor. These people have taken the initiative. They know that nothing is so serious to an officer as an imputation of dishonesty, and they are willing to sacrifice you or any one else to force through their big steal. You will have to prosecute publicly in order to save yourself."

Douglas mopped his face. Through the long campaign in the Philippines he had, without faltering, faced dangers which tried the courage of the bravest men in ranks, but now he was pitted against an enemy who fought with strange weapons and according to plans with which he was entirely unfamiliar. In the presence of such an enemy he felt as helpless as the giant blind man who wakes in the night with the realization that he is alone in a burning building.

Up to this time he had regarded the situation with annoyance and disgust, but now as the details unfolded themselves he was seized with deep alarm. Benedict had said, "These people will hesitate at nothing. They have committed enough crimes to put them all behind the bars for years on top of years, and they are not going to temporize now when they see the opportunity for accomplishing the greatest financial enterprise they have ever planned."

Douglas might well feel anxious. He sat gazing intently at the floor. The slow tread of the sentry sounded in cadenced strokes

upon the sidewalk and died away as the loyal watcher passed on to the north.

A slight creaking sound came to his ears. Douglas glanced up at Roderick. The latter was gazing intently straight to the front, but his expression had completely changed. His face had the tense, drawn look which, in spite of all efforts at control, almost invariably overspreads the countenance of men in the presence of danger.

Rory bent slowly forward and said in a low tone, "Have you a pistol, Dug?"

"Yes."

"Loaded?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Look in the mirror of your bureau."

Douglas shifted his chair unconcernedly. His eyes following the direction indicated, fell upon the mirror in which the rear window of the room was reflected. Nothing was visible for a moment. Then the chills crept over him like pulsating electric currents, as he dimly outlined the form of a man close to the window and apparently watching every move. The breeze gently blew the curtains about and as they tossed aside uncovering the view,

Douglas saw the form approach the window-pane, and with a shudder beheld a black mask with a pair of glittering eyes behind it.

Have you ever felt your flesh all turn to goose quills and the hair bristle on top of your head with sense of impending danger? Have you ever suddenly found yourself about to tread upon a poisonous reptile? If not, you cannot appreciate the sensation which thrilled the young officer as he sat gazing at the spectacle outlined in his mirror. His back was partially turned to the window and from the manner of the watcher who had just pressed his face against the pane Douglas judged that he had received no warning that his presence had been discovered.

"He must have climbed to the balcony over the porch by means of a ladder," said Douglas in a low tone. "We could capture him right now, but I do not want to startle mother and Gertrude."

"Let me have the gun," said Rory, "and I'll slip down-stairs to the foot of the ladder. As soon as I get there, throw open the window and land one of your old time punches square

on that mask. I'll do the rest when your friend reaches the ground."

"No," said Douglas. "Thieves seldom go alone. There is probably another, and you might get the worst of it. We'll both go down. I'll get my revolver from the closet behind me. You may take the gun. I prefer the heavy bludgeon I used to employ in killing rattlesnakes up in the Shawangunks."

Douglas rose leisurely, threw off his coat as if preparing for bed, and entered his closet while Rory stepped out on the landing. In a moment Douglas joined him, slipping the big army six-shooter into his hand and leading the way down-stairs two steps at a time. Swinging the front door open the two young men stepped out upon the porch and tiptoed toward the steps.

"There he goes," whispered Douglas, as he saw a dark form slip noiselessly away from the foot of the ladder. "Don't shoot. We must capture him."

In one leap Douglas turned the corner of the house and saw the flying figure running like a deer not thirty paces away.

"Halt!" yelled Douglas. "Halt, or I'll

fire!" But the call merely spurred the runner to a new burst of speed, and Douglas leaped after him determined to stop him, for none but a trained sprinter could hope to outrun him if the race could last for but a few moments.

Through the yard of the house the trio sped to the road leading back of officers' quarters, where a clear stretch seemed to offer no escape from a test of speed and endurance.

The terrific patter of feet resounding through the darkness brought to the ears of the flying fugitive the realization that he must be caught in an open race. He had outdistanced "cops" without difficulty, eluded plain clothes men, and plied his trade in defiance of all attempts to capture him, but in one swift glance over his shoulder he saw that flight from the pair behind him was hopeless.

"Go it, Dug," grunted Rory. "I'll shoot if you say so."

"Don't shoot," said Douglas between his teeth. "We can outrun him."

The words had scarcely been uttered when the fugitive whirled to the right, disappeared through an open gate in the high wall in rear

of quarters, closed the gate with a bang, and shot home the bolt on the inside.

A second later Douglas was tearing furiously at the gate while the fugitive was flying across the soft grass plots down the officers' line to safety.

Stepping back, Douglas prepared to scale the wall, but Roderick seized him by the arm. "What did you do with the check?" he gasped.

"Left it on the table."

"Go back, go back quickly and get it. I'll cut around the corner and try to catch our man," and Rory was off like a greyhound.

The danger to which he was exposing his precious evidence against Westmoreland had completely escaped Douglas, but with Rory's question all the warnings which Benedict had suggested to him came back like a flash of light.

Without a word he turned back toward his quarters at a lively trot, but as the consequences of his indiscretion suggested themselves to his mind he broke into a run and reached his porch almost breathless.

With a leap at his heart he noted the ladder

resting against the balcony, the window wide open, and a dark shadow silhouetted against the curtain on the inside. On his tiptoes he sped to the top of the stairs and gently thrust open the door. A heavy-set man, masked like the first, whirled about and faced him at the side of the table. In his left hand he held the check and with a lightning-like motion of the right he reached for the switch to extinguish the light.

Like a panther Douglas sprang forward, forgetting all danger in his frantic desire to recover the check and hold his evidence against Westmoreland. The club which he gripped in his left hand was forgotten, and as the light went out, Douglas drove his clenched fist with all his strength into the face of the intruder.

Back into the corner reeled the man with a low grunt of pain, and Douglas closed upon him, seizing his left wrist with a grip like steel. His disengaged hand closed upon the end of the check, and with all his strength he tried to pry open the stubby fingers which held it as if in a vice. Scarcely had the struggle begun when Douglas felt the shock

of a tremendous blow, and rolled headlong to the floor.

A few moments later he was sitting in a chair, hazily grasping the situation. Rory O'Connor was mopping the blood from his face, while on the table lay the check, torn raggedly across the end.

Douglas looked up and laughed almost hysterically.

"I see I got more than my half," he said, "both in the parts of the check and in the exchange of punches."

"Yes," laughed Rory, patting him on the back, "you got more than you dreamed of," and Rory held up the check with black finger prints on both sides. "The paint on the ladder was not quite dry, and, oh, you Bertillon, look at the marks left all over the room. Dug, old scout, we've got a clue even though the blacklegs got away clean."

CHAPTER VI

A VISIT TO A PROMINENT BANKING HOUSE

WHEN Douglas beheld the evil face peering through his bedroom window his first impression was that he had discovered a sneak-thief who had decided to burglarize his quarters. It did not occur to him that such thieves take big risks only when they feel quite sure that the risks are warranted by the stakes for which they are playing, and that the quarters of a poor second lieutenant of the United States Army offer a very small prospect for profitable loot. Upon looking over the premises, the first-class thief is sure to note that a sentinel trained and ordered to shoot and armed with a repeating rifle, capable of firing five aimed shots while a man runs less than two hundred yards, is constantly marching around the officers' quarters at night, and that while the chances of discovery are very much greater than in raids upon the quarters of civilians, the chances of big prizes are

immeasurably less. The thief prefers to fatten on richer pastures, and only a compelling motive or certain knowledge of the interior of a building such as may be acquired by a household employee will induce a burglar to hazard entering an officer's quarters.

This thought did not occur to Douglas, but it did occur to the keener mind of Roderick O'Connor, and caused him to urge Douglas to return to his room for the purpose of guarding the check which he had so thoughtlessly thrown on the table. Douglas had arrived in the very nick of time, and the subsequent inspection of the room left no doubt as to the object of the raid.

"You see," said Roderick, "nothing has been disturbed. There were two men, at least two, as you suggested, and while we chased the one who was standing guard at the foot of the ladder, the other fellow crept through the window and made straight for the thing he was after—the check; and what does this suggest? Naturally, that he was sent here by your friend Westmoreland to get the check.

"No doubt he had orders not to kill you because Westmoreland wants you to live, and

you can thank him now for having merely a badly swollen jaw instead of a knife in your chest.

"Having ascertained that the registered letter had been duly receipted for, the next maneuver would be to get back the check and prevent you from finding out the identity of the writer provided he thought you intended to prosecute or felt that you could not be bribed."

"But my return not only spoiled that game, but gave us an additional clue."

Douglas rose and examined the window. On the sill was the full print of four stubby fingers in such position as to make it certain that the partial impression of the left hand had been secured. The ladder was resting against the porch, and the corporal of the guard with the relief stood talking to the sentinel below.

"Take your post here, and watch the house. Don't let nobody come near. Them 'ere's your orders."

"Klondyke Jones," said Douglas to himself with a chuckle. "The 'ole sojer' has been made a corporal at last."

"I ran into the sentinel," explained Roderick, "and asked him if he had seen or heard any one pass. That is why they happen to know something is amiss up here."

"Corporal Jones," called Douglas.

"Yes, sir."

"Wait a moment."

Douglas tiptoed down-stairs and the "ole sojer," standing at rigid attention, snapped up his left hand to the rifle salute.

"I have no authority to give orders, corporal, but if you are putting a sentinel over the house I would like to explain that no one should touch that ladder or come close enough to the house to cover up any footprints that may have been left by the fellow who was here."

"They won't be nobody get near, sir," said the corporal. "If the critter comes back here he won't leave no more footprints nowhere."

Corporal Jones saluted with great precision, and turned to the "extry" sentinel he was posting. His language was far from elegant, but when he finished instructing the sentinel there was no doubt that Corporal Jones wanted that post guarded, and guarded "proper."

"Right shoulder arms! For'ard, march!"

The relief moved off up the sidewalk and the sentinel slowly walked his post around the house which would be the center of interest to every one in the garrison at dawn, for the news would spread like wild-fire through the barracks, and from barracks to quarters, even before the officers had descended for breakfast.

As Douglas watched the relief march away, a flood of reminiscences came back to his mind—his arrival in the Philippines as a recruit and his assignment to the squad of which Private "Klondyke" Jones was a member and Corporal Jim Casey was the chief. The "ole sojer" had been his staunch friend from the first, as whole-souled, honest, and fearless a warrior as ever shouldered a rifle.

What a campaign they had prosecuted together and how honest and truly exalted had been the motives which impelled them to suffer the frightful heat, the pangs of hunger and thirst, to march with bleeding feet through jungle and swamp where every forward step brought anguish to the flesh and a deeper sense of danger to the dizzy brain.

Yet they went on. "And so I will go on now," mused Douglas as he ran his hand over his bruised face. "Benedict made no mistake. There is plenty of danger in this game, but I'll take the same chance we used to take in a charge on a hostile trench in the Philippines. We will fight this out to the end."

Douglas turned and walked back to his room.

Rory was still gazing at the check.

"It's a great clue," said he. "We must get the distinguished gentleman who wrote it and send him to jail to break stones with the fellow who left his finger prints upon the face of it. I have been thinking that we had better take it to-morrow morning to your friend Benedict, and start the prosecution without a moment's delay. There is nothing like taking the initiative, and forcing the other fellow to play to your lead. What do you say?"

"That is so clearly the correct thing to do that it seems strange I did not think of it before," replied Douglas. "We'll put the whole thing in Benedict's hands and prosecute to a finish. He will realize that here is the

chance of his life to beat the combination, and should he bring the promoters to justice his success would make him the biggest man on the Pacific Coast. I agreed to help if I could ; now comes my chance, and I will take it. That is the plan, without a doubt. We prepare for immediate attack."

He slapped Rory on the back in high glee. The situation had suddenly changed for him. Instead of feeling the dread and uncertainty which saps the strength of the man on the defensive he suddenly realized the power of the offensive, the power of the man who looks forward, not backward, who no longer meditates upon the consequences but goes forward fearlessly, resolutely, breaking down resistance and carrying consternation to the heart of his antagonist.

Douglas placed his check in an envelope, placed the envelope underneath his pillow with a loaded six-shooter beside it, and he and Rory turned in for the night. With Corporal "Klondyke" Jones on guard there was no cause for further worry, and both were asleep in a few minutes.

The sun was an hour high the next morn-

ing when Douglas awoke and gently slid out of bed. In the next room Roderick was sleeping soundly, and as there was no occasion to arouse him Douglas dressed quietly and went to the 'phone.

"Let me have F Company," he said to the operator.

"Hello, is that you, Hartford?"

"Have you your camera ready for work?"

"Well, I would like to have you come over at half-past eight this morning to take some photographs."

Douglas hung up the receiver and went out upon the porch with note-book, pencil and small triangular ruler. The young sentinel on duty brought his rifle to the present and gazed admiringly at the black lump upon the side of the lieutenant's face. To the young soldier the "lieutenant" who had routed an armed burglar and chased him in headlong flight from the post was a hero of no small proportions. The narrative had grown during the night until the participants in the encounter would not have recognized the original incident as the subject of the story.

Quite unconscious of the admiration which

he inspired, Douglas moved out upon the lawn and carefully examined the ground beneath the window. There were no well-defined marks upon the grassy surface. He moved around the corner of the building and there, close beside the walk at the base of a patch of shrubbery, lay a pair of badly worn shoes, while beyond was the print of a foot in the soft earth near the rear gate.

"The fellow we chased," thought Douglas, and he stopped and accurately measured the dimensions of the footprint, recording the measurements in his note-book. No other marks could be found, and with his shoes, corresponding clearly in size with the print of the foot, Douglas returned to the ladder.

"There are the clear prints of the fingers in the soft black paint," mused Douglas, "the invaluable clue to the identity of the fellow who packs away such a fearful punch in his right fist."

Douglas went back to his room, shaved and dressed, and with Rory came down to breakfast.

Gertrude and his mother were awaiting them in the parlor, terrified over the news

that had just come to them from Mrs. Brady, the loyal housekeeper for the Atwells since their arrival at Fort McDowell.

Not a sound had been heard, and the discovery that Douglas had fought the man in his room, "had chased him out of the post," as the story ran, filled them with consternation and dread.

"You didn't think you ever saw the man before, Douglas?" asked Mrs. Atwell cautiously.

"No," said Douglas hesitatingly. "I didn't recognize the man," but his eyes had a far-away look and back in the deep recesses of his brain memory unconsciously seemed to be striving to reconstruct the past.

Before breakfast was over, two reporters were elbowing their way into the house, and Douglas was striving to tell them as little as possible of the events of the night. Only Rory and Douglas knew of the receipt of the check, and the object of the burglary was left to the active imagination of the reporter.

Hartford, the company clerk and amateur photographer of the post, arrived at 8:30 o'clock and carefully photographed the finger

prints upon the ladder and on the window sill, and so much of the check as showed the finger prints and the signature of the drawee, the rest being covered by a slip of paper as a measure of precaution. Then Douglas instructed Hartford to develop the films in private, to tell no one about the matter, and under no circumstances to permit any one but himself to examine the prints.

The ladder was removed to the cellar, the shoes were packed away, and Rory and Douglas set out for the office.

"I want you to see my young sleuth, Roland McGrew," said Douglas, as they approached the Phelan Building. "He knows nearly every hard character in San Francisco, and we may get yeoman service from him in searching for our man."

"Morning papers! Buy the morning papers!" came the bell-like chant, roughened and brazened somewhat by the strain demanded to rise above the uproar of the street.

"So that's your Sherlock Holmes?" laughed Rory as he saw the red head and freckled face of the shabby little newsboy. "Why didn't you get something young?"

"Good-morning, Roland," said Douglas;
"any news?"

The newsboy's eyes measured Rory in one of those critical glances full of caution and suspicion which waifs of the street acquire in that fierce struggle for life which makes them rate every one as prey, or preyed.

"He's all right," said Douglas, smiling, and indicating his companion.

Roland was slowly getting out a newspaper, and as he handed it to Douglas he said in a low tone, "The guy who is standing on the corner is laying for you. Watch out."

Douglas stopped at the door and turned quickly.

The eyes of the man on the corner were fixed upon him with an intensity which left no doubt that the malevolence in his criminal face was directed at him.

"My little Sherlock has an eye, eh, Rory?" said Douglas as he reached the office.

"He certainly has," replied Rory thoughtfully. "Bless me if I ever looked into such a face as that across the street, and we would have missed him if your little Sherlock had not cautioned us."

Douglas took the envelope from his pocket, saw that the check was there, and handed it to Rory, who left at once to find Benedict and report the case to him.

Douglas entered the drafting room and at once went to work. At nine o'clock he reported to the chief quartermaster, received his instructions and resumed operations on the plan outlined to him.

The plans for a larger garrison for the Presidio were under consideration and the relation between the water supply and the sewage system of the post and that of San Francisco led him to study the whole structure of the city with the most minute attention.

There lay the poor district in the poorest section of which Roland McGrew had his miserable home ; so close to it that one could imagine such proximity impossible lay the business section in the most prosperous part of which stood the towering office building in which Westmoreland hatched his schemes.

Douglas traced a pencil down the streets, and made a cross mark at the intersection where stood the bank of Shelton, Love & Co., upon which the \$25,000 check had been

drawn. His eyes rested upon it with increasing fascination, and again and again he traced out a cross at the intersection of the streets, vaguely wondering what might be the outcome of this singular situation. Had he been able to look into the future for a period of but a few days, he would have seen the whole drama of his life suddenly changing on the very spot which he was now marking upon the map. But it is not given to man to look into the future. He threw the map aside and resumed his work, but it was impossible to keep his mind off the events which had crowded so closely into the experiences of the last two days.

Westmoreland—where had he seen him, or had he ever seen him before?

Back into his mind floated the image of the great throng at Franklin Field. He saw the struggling teams panting, fighting desperately for the mastery which hung in the balance; he lived again through the moments of that great dash which carried the ball through a broken field until a flying tackle brought him down with a crash, his collar-bone broken, his hopes of victory gone. As he was carried

from the field he seemed to recall the features of Westmoreland, but the background would not be defined. He could not remember.

However uncertain the past, there could be no doubt about the present, or the intentions for the future. The bid must be rejected, and Westmoreland must be prosecuted, and he and his associates must suffer the full penalty of the law if it were possible to impose it.

It was therefore with badly disturbed mind that Douglas plodded away at his work until the office clock recorded the hour of high noon, and he seized his hat and dashed downstairs.

Faithful to his instructions, Hartford was waiting for him at the door with the developed photographs of the finger prints and check, and with these safely tucked away in his pocket, Douglas hurried down the crowded walks of Market Street to the bank building marked on the map in his office with a cross, where Rory and Benedict were awaiting his arrival.

"We have talked it all over," said Benedict, "and have decided to make an effort to find the name of the man who wrote the check.

Are you ready to let me go ahead and use such measures as I see fit?"

"Go ahead," said Douglas. "The case is in your hands."

"Very well," said Benedict; "wait a moment!" He stepped to the cashier's window. "Is Mr. Love in?"

"He'll be here in a moment, sir; step into the private office and I will tell him you wish to see him."

Benedict led the way into the beautifully furnished room in which Mr. Love transacted more business each day than all the bankers of a dozen little towns to the north and south of San Francisco.

The group had scarcely taken seats when the door opened and Mr. Love stepped in.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Benedict. What can I do for you to-day?" he said in the strict businesslike way which impelled promptness on the part of the most sluggish.

Benedict did not take time to introduce Douglas or Rory, but proceeded at once to the object of his business.

"I have a check which I want to present to you," said Benedict, carefully avoiding any

reference to a desire to secure payment. "The amount is large, and I thought it best to come to you in person."

"Yes ; what is the amount ? " said Mr. Love.

"Twenty-five thousand dollars."

Just the faintest suspicion of a smile came to Mr. Love's lips, and his hands shifted to the arms of his chair. His whole attitude was one of cautious reserve.

"The amount will give us no difficulty if the check is properly drawn."

"If it is drawn by a party whose signature you recognize and whose account is good for the amount of the check, of course you will honor it ? "

Mr. Love nodded.

Benedict laid the mutilated check upon the table, and Douglas held his breath. There seemed to be no reason why the identity of the person who drew the check should not be revealed the next moment.

Mr. Love adjusted his glasses and gazed intently at the torn and crumpled fragment of paper with its finger prints on both sides, and with a little nervous twitch of the face he arose.



„WHAT IS THE AMOUNT?“

"Just a moment," said he, but Benedict's heavy hand was upon his arm.

"I cannot let that check leave my possession," said he. "Had I desired to transact business in public I would have gone direct to the paying teller's window. I wanted my interview to be unobserved. Hence my presence in your private office. Is the check all right?"

Mr. Love sank back in his chair, restraining his emotions by that masterful self-control which, coupled with his genius for business, had made him one of the leading young bankers of San Francisco. His eyes were gazing steadily into vacancy as he said, "Yes, the check is all right."

"Payable—now?" asked Benedict.

Mr. Love's face twitched slightly. "No," said he; "certain conditions must be guaranteed before payment can be made."

"Exactly," said Benedict. "Now please tell me where I may find the signer of the check in order that I may learn the conditions which must be guaranteed."

"Entirely unnecessary," said Mr. Love. "I am authorized to state the conditions under which the check will be paid."

"And what are the conditions?"

"The check will be paid on presentation of suitable proof that the bid of Jacobs, Sharp & Co. will be accepted by the government."

"I regret I cannot deal with you in this matter," said Benedict. "I must meet the gentleman in person who signed the check."

"Impossible," said Mr. Love, emphatically. "He cannot be interviewed on the subject."

Benedict rose and placed the check in his pocket. "Then you may tell the gentleman," said he, "that the bid will be rejected as soon as the necessary formalities can be complied with."

CHAPTER VII

A CLOSER VIEW OF THE MAN ON THE CORNER

BENEDICT rose as he made his announcement to Mr. Love and prepared to leave the room. He wished his statement to carry with it all the appearances of a final decision, thus forcing the banking house to reveal the name of the signer of the note or to risk failure of the enterprise. If he had expected to see Mr. Love weaken in his determination, he was disappointed. The latter nodded, rose with equal promptness and pushed open the private door of his office. The movement revealed the interior of a handsomely furnished room, but it also revealed the grim and startled face of one who had been pressing his ear close to the crack and listening to every word that had been uttered.

"Westmoreland," whispered Douglas, as he gripped Benedict by the arm. "Did you see him?"

"Yes," said Benedict, passing into the main hall. "I knew somebody was listening."

"What shall we do? Arrest him?"

"My dear boy," said Benedict, "don't anticipate your signals. Never start your play until you are reasonably certain you are ready. There is no specific charge against Westmoreland yet."

They had reached the door of the bank and were passing into the street and Douglas hesitated as to the best course to follow. He had seen Westmoreland, but the latter had also seen him or knew he was present. It was useless to attempt disguising his movements; both sides could guess fairly well the course pursued by the other, but Benedict had endeavored to conceal the true object of his visit to the bank.

Accustomed to believe that all men have their price, Westmoreland was, in all probability, in doubt only as to what the price might be. In fact he was likely to consider the visit to the bank as the first evidence of a willingness to make terms. It was upon this that Benedict figured in considering his course of action.

"We will have lunch together," said he, and the three young men turned up Market Street.

"Morning papers—all the morning papers," came the shrill call of a young voice.

Douglas smiled and glanced toward Roderick.

"Give me a 'Journal,' Roland," said Douglas.

"The guy is following," whispered Roland, as he handed over the paper and leisurely sauntered down the street in the wake of the three stalwart fellows, piping out his unceasing call, and ever shifting his watchful gaze to catch the meaning of every look and gesture about him. Food and life depended on his quick interpretation of the intentions of the men about him, and he had grown by intuition to read the face of passers-by with more certainty than most boys read the printed page of a book. Not a movement of the man who followed the group along Market Street had escaped his observation, nor would the memory of his malicious face ever be obliterated from the lad's active mind. He kept his place between the pursued and the pursuer and as-

sured himself that no word of conversation could reach the ears of the leathern-visaged creature who was following.

"The situation is like this," said Benedict. "The check is good. It is backed by the most solid capital of San Francisco and Mr. Love is personally interested—perhaps vitally. He knows all about the circumstances under which the check was drawn, and when he rose to take the check inside his office he was merely maneuvering for a chance to see Westmoreland and decide on what was best to do. The finger-marks did not escape his observation and Westmoreland already knows the condition in which the check was shown. He cannot be sure that the finger-marks were left by his man, but you can rest assured that we must show no disposition to fight in the open until we get the fellows jailed who were in your room, and also that when we make arrests we must simultaneously get every one concerned in the scheme."

They had reached the restaurant and were passing through the door when Roland McGrew sauntered by, singing out his news-boy's call, and took up his post on the oppo-

site side of the street, bouncing a little rubber ball, seeming to see nothing, but seeing everything.

Douglas took a seat facing the door, in order that he might observe all that was passing in the street, while Benedict and Rory sat opposite to him. The former resumed conversation at once.

"We must decide upon a plan," said he. "I must create the impression that the bribe will be accepted, but insist on meeting the man who signed the check. I have a friend among the clerks who can probably find out the identity of the signer. If you give me a photo of the signature, I will get him to examine the book, but the thing to do now is to arrange for locating the fellows whose finger prints you secured. Have you the photographs?"

"In my pocket," said Douglas. "Here is one of the check, with finger prints, signature and everything except that my name has been cut out."

"Good. Then let us drop over to police headquarters immediately after lunch and look up the records."

"Dandy," said Roderick. "The case is waxing interesting. I am going to apply for an extension of leave and see this thing through."

"I don't know whether any finger records exist at police headquarters, but it is just possible that we might find our friends tabulated as precisely as if they were registered in the telephone directory."

The sharp call of Roland McGrew was sounding again across the street.

Douglas reached out his foot and pressed it sharply on the toe of his attorney friend. The "shadow" was entering the front door of the restaurant.

Benedict was not the kind of man who needs a current of ten amperes and one hundred volts to tell him that something is happening. His cautious glance at Douglas assured him that the danger was immediate, and that some one was entering whose identity was important.

"As I was saying," he went on, as if in continuation of the previous conversation, "the weather was fine when we reached the woods, and we camped that night in a little shack in

the heart of the Adirondacks," and Benedict went on to narrate a thrilling story without apparent break in the continuity of his theme. The ingenious transition was not only highly amusing, but it gave Douglas an opportunity to study the sinister looking person who had just taken his seat at the next table.

Seldom does one see such a character. He was nearly six feet tall, muscled like a woodsman, and yellow as saffron. His skin had the appearance of tanned leather, and his clean-shaven face the soulless expression of one who has long since parted company with any sentiment of humanity. His eyebrows rose to an apex at the center and drooped down at the corners over deep-set brown eyes which had the yellow bloodshot look which one frequently sees in the eye of the negro. His bald forehead and crown sloped backward without appreciable change of curvature, forming a peaked head, so flat in the back that the neck seemed to continue unchanged to the crown. His heavy lips, drooping at the corners, hung loosely over a mouthful of massive teeth, and his short chin fell away without defined curve to his throat.

A cheap suit of clothing, worn at the elbows and knees, too short but yet too full, suggested poverty, but not labor, while his every movement inspired a feeling of aversion such as one feels at the sight of a huge manlike ape.

Douglas frowned as he looked at the creature who had been appointed to watch his movements. "If external appearances are any index to the character," thought he, "there is surely no crime you would hesitate to commit if it suited your purpose."

Benedict, sitting with his back to the newcomer, knew from his observation of Douglas' face that no further conversation was permissible on the subject so deeply interesting to all of them, and the rest of the meal passed in a jolly rambling talk on trivialities.

They had scarcely risen to go, when the ill-shapen creature rose slowly to his feet and followed.

"I want a look at him," said Benedict, in a low tone. "We will stop just outside the door and let him pass," but the "shadow" had not chosen to pass. Instead he sauntered across the street, drew a paper from his pocket,

and leaning against a lamp-post apparently began to read.

Benedict smiled. "That is Blair Parkinson, the greatest crook in San Francisco. I sent him to the penitentiary three years ago for forgery. He wrote me that he would kill me as soon as he got out. He would do it, too, if he thought it good policy. What a beast!"

Benedict shivered, and Douglas felt a chill creep over him. Never before had he felt fear of any man. During his service in the Philippines he had been compelled to recognize a fierce Moro as his personal enemy, had been compelled to meet him alone in a death struggle, his bayonet pitted against the keen edged *kampilan*, but never before had the sight of any man inspired him with a feeling of horror and fear until he looked into the face of Blair Parkinson, ex-convict, and hired shadower of his every movement. In a personal struggle with this man, trained in crime from infancy, what hope had Douglas Atwell or any of his kind? In personal conflict not at all; but the entire force of the law and all decent members of society are allied with the champion of right, and before the dictates of

such law Blair Parkinson had once been forced to bow. "And you will have to bow again," mused Douglas, as he gazed across the street at the horrible specimen of the human family which an equally unscrupulous member of society had found it "profitable" to employ.

"Come," said Benedict, "we will go back to your office. Parkinson has no orders to follow you into the building. I think that much is certain."

The three started down the street, and the shrill pipe of Roland McGrew announced that Blair Parkinson was following. It was an unpleasant sensation to feel that every step was dogged, and conversation completely ceased. Inside the building, however, there was no further chance of espionage, and Benedict stopped in the vestibule.

"I will come up to the front door with my auto at half-past four this afternoon. If you are ready we will take a spin, so as to lose Parkinson, and then try our luck with the finger prints. You have them ready, Atwell?"

"Yes," said Douglas, "everything is ready. Keep the check. I have no further use for it."

Benedict and Roderick left, and Douglas went back to his work.

The chief quartermaster met him in the hall. "I am considering those bids," he said. "Your friend Westmoreland paid me a visit, but I declined to listen, and he promptly realized that discretion is the better part of valor and left apologizing for any inconvenience his visit may have given me. Of course the bid submitted by his firm will be rejected. The ultimate decision rests with the authorities at Washington, but an adverse report here will kill the bid, and we cannot send forward the others till we are satisfied with the relative merits of those which should be favorably considered. Have there been any developments in your plan of action against the firm?"

Douglas briefly related what had occurred, while his superior officer listened in astonishment.

"Well," said he, "I wish you success. You are treading on dangerous ground. It is one thing to reject a dishonest proposal; another to prosecute the backers. The government should in no way be involved officially; we

merely recommend that the bid be rejected, but in your private capacity I take it you are at liberty to assist your legal friend in any way you may see fit."

"I understand, sir," said Douglas. "The thing is now strictly personal. The firm thinks it can buy me, and get a favorable report. I will allow them to remain in ignorance in order to secure the necessary evidence. The prosecution will be for other acts than those connected with the bid; the latter is merely the incident which brings me into the case. By means of it the whole mechanism by which the firm operates will be exposed and possibly the combination may be broken up."

"Well, I wish you success," said the chief quartermaster smiling. "It is a big job and a dangerous one."

Douglas went into the drafting room and resumed his task. Before him stood out the cross marking the site of the great banking house presided over by Mr. Love and his associates, a firm whose assets were counted in millions and whose influence extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific, whose voice in the

affairs of Wall Street were heard with invariable deference and respect. This was the gigantic concern against which an obscure lieutenant of the army had dared to try his strength. How was he to win in such a struggle?

Manifestly information must be secured as to the signer of the check. In all probability full knowledge on this point could be had either at Westmoreland's office or at the bank. Benedict was investigating the latter. In order that no time might be lost, it would be well perhaps to start at once on an investigation of the former, but how was this to be done?

The whole thing might be left to Benedict or placed in the hands of a detective, but the adoption of the latter plan might prove fatal. Blair Parkinson knew every policeman and detective in San Francisco, and was as able as any one of them. Only the best talent from some other city would be of any use, but there were neither funds available for defraying the necessary expense, nor time to secure the services of a suitable man. How could the thing be done?

"The Journal, Press, Times." The words floated faintly up from the street below, and Douglas paused in his work as he heard them. "Roland McGrew!"

Might the boy not succeed in a job of this kind where a full grown man would fail? He had been able to keep track of Westmoreland, had discovered that Blair Parkinson was watching Douglas, and had used his simple newsboy's call to warn him of the great criminal's every movement. Such capacity for observation and such naturalness in handling to advantage the simple means at hand are seldom possessed even by those who give their lives to the attainment of these accomplishments.

"Yes," mused Douglas. "I will try it. Here is the opportunity for Roland; who knows what may result should he be successful? Yes, who knows?"

Douglas went to the window and looked cautiously down into the street. On the opposite corner stood Blair Parkinson, waiting, his blinking eyes fixed on the front door of the building, never tiring of his vigil, never relenting, never forgetting, like the wild beast

of prey which watches and waits beside the cool spring for its victim to come down to drink.

Again the chills crept over Douglas as he thought of the conflict between himself and this man which now seemed inevitable.

"But I must not stop," said he. "I am going on."

He called a clerk.

"Do you see that newsboy in the street?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, please go down and buy a paper from him, and tell him to meet me at the back door of this building."

"Yes, sir."

When the clerk had gone, Douglas drew from his pocket the photographic copy of the check. The film was there from which he could develop any number of prints if he needed them. He cut out the unreadable signature, folded it into the smallest possible form, and went down to the back door.

"The boy will be here in a few moments," said the clerk, and almost as he spoke Roland sauntered carelessly through the back door, drawling out his newspaper cry and tossing

the rubber ball from one little black fist to the other.

Douglas turned into a vacant room and Roland followed without command.

"Roland," said the young officer, "I want to find out certain things about Mr. Westmoreland's office. Do you think you can do the work for me?"

"Yes."

Douglas related enough of the circumstances to impress the boy with the importance of the mission, but not enough to hurt his case should his confidence in Roland prove to be misplaced, and then drew out the precious signature. "And now, my boy, as you value your life, don't let this slip get away from you. Find out who uses that signature, if you can. Look out for any meetings of big people that may take place in Mr. Westmoreland's office, and let me know if any occur. Do you know Mr. Love, of the Prescott Bank?"

"No, sir."

"Well, locate him if possible, and let me know should he and Mr. Westmoreland meet in the Merchants' Building. Do you think you can do all this?"

"Yes, sir."

"How will you manage it?"

"Don't know," said Roland, tossing the ball, "but I'll find out somehow."

"All right," said Douglas smiling. "Here is enough money to meet expenses for a few days. You will probably need some spare cash."

Roland slipped out of the back door and was soon lost in the street, while Douglas went back to his room. Curiosity prompted him to go to the window again to take another look at Blair Parkinson, but to his astonishment the latter had completely disappeared.

"What can be the meaning of this move? He has watched me all day, yet now as the hour approaches for leaving the office he has left his post."

And then a thought came pulsing through the young officer's mind which made his brain reel and his heart stand still.

"Suppose this beast has observed Roland McGrew's conduct, has noted his entrance to the building by the rear door, and has vaguely guessed the object of his visit. What would be the boy's fate should this be true, and

Blair Parkinson should decide to avenge himself?"

Douglas looked up and down the street in anxiety and then went to the rear of the building. Roland was nowhere in sight. It was too late to recall him.

"Anyway," mused Douglas, "it is foolish to think that Parkinson noticed the move. I am giving him credit for entirely too much cleverness, and myself entirely too much anxiety about him. He is a common crook, and no doubt a coward like the rest."

He worked away with zeal during the rest of the afternoon, and at 4:30 P. M. sharp walked out of the door and stepped into the big auto which rolled up with Roderick and Benedict.

The machine sped up Market Street, out through the park, along the beautiful drive to the Cliff House, and then turned its nose toward the city. Douglas had related the events of the afternoon, but had made no mention of his fears about Blair Parkinson.

"I think we have lost him," he said, as they swept around a corner and turned toward the office of the chief of police. Doug-

las thrust his hand into his pocket to feel for his photographic finger prints as the hunter feels the breech block of his rifle when he has tracked a bear over the mountains for a day and finally feels that the next few minutes must bring him face to face with his prey.

They drew up behind a large automobile which stood in the street, and hurriedly descended. No one was in sight, and the three men pushed on toward their objective. Together they entered and, Benedict leading, turned toward the private office of one of the most talented of the employees of the bureau. As they did so, the door swung open and Mr. Stanhope Everett Westmoreland emerged from the room jauntily dressed in a fine spring suit and a Panama hat.

Behind him came Blair Parkinson.

"How do you do, Mr. Benedict?" said Mr. Westmoreland, affably. "I am glad to see you—and you, Mr. Atwell. I haven't the pleasure of knowing your friend."

"This is Mr. O'Connor," said Douglas, striving to conceal his emotions and to appear undisturbed.

"On the other hand, it is not necessary to introduce the gentleman who is with you, Mr. Westmoreland," said Rory promptly, grasping the lawyer's hand, and taking the lead in the emergency, as he always did. Then turning to Benedict and Douglas, Rory said with the utmost solemnity, "Gentlemen, let me make you acquainted with Mr. Westmoreland's friend and associate. This is Blair Parkinson, the gentleman who was convicted by Mr. Benedict of forgery three years ago, and has just finished his term in the penitentiary. Mr. Parkinson is now at liberty, and the fact that we find him here at police headquarters in such excellent company indicates that a complete understanding exists between himself and the representatives of the law. I congratulate you, Mr. Parkinson."

CHAPTER VIII

A VISIT TO THE SLUMS

It is hardly necessary to say that Roderick O'Connor's remarks startled his hearers, but Mr. Westmoreland was too well trained in the business of legal chicanery to feel much disturbed by the position in which he had been placed. The manner of the introduction of this ex-convict to Benedict and Douglas simply amounted to serving notice on Mr. Westmoreland that his methods were perfectly well understood, a fact which he no doubt already surmised, if he did not fully recognize it. Perhaps it was unwise, from the lawyer's point of view, to take this unusual action, but Rory loved to fight in the open. The mask was off, and instinctively he felt that Douglas would be benefited by associating his enemy with a criminal and virtually announcing that they were partners in a dishonorable conspiracy.

The enemy, however, had arrived on the

scene of action first. A few moments' difference might have completely changed the thread of this narrative, but those few moments were lost in the ride to the Cliff House. Suffice it to say that Benedict secured no information which would help him to discover the identity of the man who had entered Douglas Atwell's room apparently for the purpose of recovering the check. In fact he conducted his inquiries so cautiously as to conceal the object of his visit, and left with only one fact determined—that the information he sought must be secured in some other way.

“Unless we learn something from my friend in the bank,” said he as they entered the auto and rolled away from police headquarters, “we will be just where we started—ignorant of the identity of the writer of the check, and ignorant as to the identity of the men who burglarized your house. There is one chance left for success. I have a close friend among the detectives of San Francisco, and if he is on duty in the vicinity I can secure his services. There is no use of going to his house now; we would be followed. I will call him on the

'phone to-night and see if we cannot arrange with him to handle the case. It will require the most carefully laid plans to break through the outposts which Westmoreland has established to protect his camp, but if we have time, we will succeed. I put Parkinson behind the bars once, and I will do it again."

"In the meantime, what is the program?" said Douglas.

"Stand pat," replied Benedict. "You cannot do anything, but 'phone me should there be any development. I am sorry that we seem to be completely beaten up to date, but the game is just beginning. I have seen the score six to nothing against me before, but at the end old Eli won out just the same."

The car had reached the dock at which the boats from Fort McDowell make their landing, and Douglas and Rory alighted and crossed the bay to the Fort.

Nothing had been actually gained by the day's operations, though much had been learned of the magnitude of the game into which they had thrown all their energy.

Gertrude was waiting for them on the porch, and her manner indicated that she

could scarcely await their arrival, so anxious was she to impart some important news.

"Come quickly," said she. "I have something to show you; you too, Mr. O'Connor," and she led the way to the landing outside of Douglas' room.

"You found all kinds of little finger prints, but see what I found," and she pointed to the full print of a hand on the outside of the window sill which had completely escaped notice.

Douglas climbed through the window to the roof of the porch and gazed intently at the clear-cut print. Then his eyes opened wide with awakened interest. There were the curls and curves of every finger so clearly defined as to identify the hand beyond doubt if an official record of it existed anywhere in the world, but there was more. Obliquely across the first two fingers and into the forward portion of the palm ran a straight line interrupting the surface like a tiny furrow across a broken field.

"Come and look, Rory," said Douglas. "Here is the discovery of the day."

Rory crawled through the window and

gazed at the telltale impression left by the midnight visitor. Then he closed his hand once or twice automatically and gazed at his own muscular palm, fully one-third smaller than the one patterned on the window sill.

"What do you make of it?" said Douglas.

"The fellow must have closed his hand some time on the blade of a knife which cut him to the bone. That could not happen in any ordinary way. People are not clasping a blade for fun, so I take it that your friend chose hanging on to that knife with his hand rather than taking it in his heart. He must have been fighting for life, and the story of the incident must be recorded somewhere. If he has remained in San Francisco, that mark will lead to his capture, no matter how well he may be protected by the interests behind him."

The two young men gazed long and earnestly until the exact location of the cut was indelibly fixed upon their memories, and then climbed back through the window, delighted with the discovery.

Gertrude was the heroine of the moment, and in high excitement related how she had

gone over the whole ground in hopes of finding something to identify the burglar who had dared to invade their home.

"I examined the shoes which the burglar left, but they had no mark, and then I climbed out on the roof and discovered the handprint. The guard has searched the island all over to-day, but could find no trace of the men. They must have escaped in a rowboat to the other side, for no one could swim to San Francisco, and the big boats had stopped running."

Highly excited over the discovery of the clue, the family came down to dinner.

The story of the burglary was known to every person on the post, and nothing else could be talked of, but only Douglas and Rory knew the significance of the occurrence.

As the meal progressed, Douglas relied on Rory to sustain the conversation while he was deep in thought as to what course he should pursue. Time was precious, and no opportunity should be wasted in following up any chance of success. Next to finding out the identity of the signer of the check the most important thing was to find the man who had entered his quarters. Perhaps the only way

to locate the former was to find the latter. Besides, there was the possibility of adventure which every young man dearly loves, and by the time dinner was over his mind had been made up.

"Rory," said he, as they left the dining-room, "I will call up Benedict and tell him that we will come over and run through the slums if he would like to take the chance of finding our man. The new clue may help us to locate the fellow without any other help. With his bruised face from the blow I gave him and his hand permanently scarred, he is so clearly marked that we ought to find him if he comes out of cover in any part of the city. What do you say to making the try?"

"I am with you," said Rory. "There is not much chance of our discovering anything, but it is worth trying."

As they were talking the telephone bell rang, and Douglas snapped down the receiver.

"Hello."

"Why, I was just about to call you, Benedict."

"Your detective is with you, and ready to do business? That is fine. We have

picked up an important clue since I came home, but I would rather not talk about it over the 'phone."

"Yes, O'Connor and I will come over just as soon as we can put on some old clothes and dress for the part. Good-bye."

"Douglas," said Gertrude, excitedly, "you don't mean to go into the city to look for that man, do you?"

Douglas nodded. "Just to look the ground over, Trudes," said he. "There is no danger," he urged, but she clung to his hand like a frightened child.

"Don't go," she said, "don't go," but he merely patted her upon the cheek and loosed her trembling fingers. Once in his room he quickly laid aside his best "cits" and pulled out of a trunk an old suit which had served for the dirty work at moving times and while off in the woods on the long tramps which he so much enjoyed. Roderick was similarly dressed, and with old slouch hats pulled down over their faces and big six-shooters brought from the company by Corporal "Klondyke" Jones carefully tucked away beneath their coat flaps, the two young men slipped out

of the house and turned toward the landing.

The boat was preparing to depart. Lieutenant and Mrs. Swayne and several other well-known friends were on deck, but Douglas and Rory boarded the boat unobserved and stood in the darkness while the little vessel pulled away from the dock and glided out upon the bay.

It was a beautiful spring evening. A clear moon hung in the eastern sky and the faint odor of flowers floated down from the surrounding hill to the two young officers concealed in the dark recesses of the boat. The happy laughter of the passengers on the upper deck floated out over the calm surface of the water, on which a single sailboat was seen dimly outlined against the city with its twinkling lights and towering church spires projecting above the horizon.

So calm and sweet seemed the whole aspect of nature that one could scarcely imagine that a half mile from the water's edge conditions could exist which surrounded the home of little Roland McGrew and furnished a hiding place for Blair Parkinson and his kind. But

in spite of the beauty of the scenery it was the disagreeable truth that such conditions did exist, and that Douglas and Rory were preparing to invade the enemy's territory. They remained concealed in the shadows until the passengers had gone ashore, and then, pulling down their hats over their eyes, they slipped down the gangplank and moved out into the city.

A block from the landing Benedict stood in the shadow awaiting their approach. Beside him loomed the figure of a man whose square shoulders and tremendous frame the dusk served to magnify rather than to diminish.

"Hawkins, this is Mr. Atwell,—and Mr. O'Connor," said Benedict. "They are the gentlemen who are going with us to-night to hunt up our man."

Hawkins grunted as he thrust out a hand which felt like tanned leather drawn tight over steel bands.

"Hawkins would like to get a description of your men, Atwell," said Benedict. "Can you tell him what they look like?"

"Yes," said Douglas. "I can give a fairly accurate description."

For a half hour Douglas described the men as he saw them in the darkness, gave the exact size of the shoes left behind, the size of the footprint in the rear of quarters, and described the finger prints and the deep cut across the hand of the fellow who had climbed through the window and with whom he had grappled in the darkness.

"Well, what do you think of it, Hawkins?" said Benedict, when Douglas finished.

"There can't be more than a dozen crooks in San Francisco to answer the description," grunted Hawkins, in his low, husky voice, which constantly suggested the roar of the sea on a rocky beach. "We ought to be able to run them all down within a week, possibly in a single night. But if they are under the control of Blair Parkinson, the case is different. Let us take a walk along the wharf first. One of the gangs hangs out in that vicinity."

Hawkins and Benedict took the lead, with Douglas and Roderick trailing along behind, feeling very much like a pair of schoolboys entering upon an undertaking with which they were entirely unfamiliar.

"I feel like a cruiser, stranded high and dry in the street," said Rory, as he felt for his big six-shooter underneath his coat. "This arsenal of mine seems about as necessary as a machine gun in a parlor. I'll eat my hat if we see anything more than an Italian fruit vender or a Chinese laundryman."

Douglas was more hopeful. Benedict, he thought, knew the city too well and Hawkins was far too experienced to make this trip through the slums if they did not have good reason to feel that there was every prospect of success.

The party had already entered the section lying close to the water-front and the foul odors, common to all such localities, were greeting the nostrils of the invaders. Here business sought its profits in the exchange of commodities between the Orient and the Occident and the venders of liquors thrived on the earnings of the laborer who handled the incoming and outgoing cargoes of this great seaport of the West. Along this water-front roamed "the gang," ready to seize upon every opportunity to snatch a precarious living from any who fell into their hands. Here Hawkins

sought the men who might reveal the identity of the firm of Jacobs, Sharp & Co., and tell the secrets which Benedict needed for establishing his case.

Hawkins had stopped on the corner beside a man in plain clothes. They exchanged quiet nods of recognition and then conversed in a low tone for several minutes.

"There has been no unusual movement on the part of the gang during the last three or four days," he explained, as he rejoined the group. "Blair Parkinson is under observation."

They moved on through a district which became poorer with every block they traversed. Business houses disappeared, and poor tenements prevailed. Children with high screeching voices, filthy clothing, and emotionless faces, filled the streets and ducked beneath the heads of horses whose drivers yelled at the urchins for their stupidity. Men and women, quite as unkempt as their offspring, straggled along the sidewalk, noting with suspicious eye every passer-by whose business in the district was not proclaimed by his dress or his bearing.

In the resorts which lined every block the hoarse voices of men could be heard as they lavishly spent the money so much needed to procure the bare necessities of life for their children in the street. Dim lights burned in miserable rooms on the upper floors crowded with hundreds of people who were never for a moment free from the destructive influences about them. A powerful spirit could resist it for a time, but no one could live his whole life in surroundings such as these and yet escape the onward sweep of the current which forever bore him downward.

Douglas shuddered. He had many times read of the poverty of certain classes in the great cities, but he had never before actually witnessed the scenes described. Here, however, was the staggering reality.

Hawkins and Benedict were turning a corner, and Douglas glanced up at the lamp-post to locate himself.

Barton Street. "This is where Roland McGrew lives," he whispered to Roderick, and his throat tightened as he thought of the boy who was condemned to an existence such as this. Worse, perhaps, if such could be

possible, were the surroundings here than those which Douglas had just witnessed. Unclean gutters reeked with foul odors, while the high-pitched tones of many foreign tongues mingled with those of the native born element to make a scene which would last long in the memory of the young officer who gazed upon the surroundings in horror.

His eyes eagerly sought the numbers of the houses to locate the exact building in which Roland McGrew was compelled to keep his mother and little sister because his earnings did not warrant a greater expenditure for rent than these miserable dwellings could command. Suddenly he saw the number painted in rough, misshapen forms on a dirty transom illumined by a dim yellow light in the hall which constituted the side entrance to one of the most gaudy of all the resorts of the neighborhood. His heart sank, but into his brain rushed that sort of feeling which Rienzi must have felt when he called the slaves together beneath the walls of Rome and invoked the Goths to rise and glut their ire. The slavery here was partially self-imposed. Only a few were striving manfully to escape,

and among these was Roland McGrew, whose chance for success would be greatly reduced if Westmoreland and the people whom he represented could but perfect the scheme which they had conceived for the commercial conquest of this gateway to the Pacific.

Douglas was startled from his reverie by the sudden change in direction of Hawkins and Benedict. They were actually entering the building in which Roland had his home, and Douglas and Rory followed, instinctively feeling for their revolvers.

The pungent odor of tobacco greeted their nostrils as they entered, and a cloud of smoke hung so thick in the room that no face was clearly visible ten paces away under the dim yellow lights which shone in dirty chandeliers.

"Look out now," said Hawkins, "and see if you can spot your man."

He led the way past a rickety table, and on toward a rear room of the den, and as they approached the back door, Douglas felt Roderick's fingers grip him by the arm, and with a leap at the heart beheld Blair Parkinson sitting at a table in a corner, his back

toward them, and his head bent low in conversation with a cowering fellow before him.

"Well?" said Hawkins, his eyes glittering, as they entered the room.

"That is our man," said Douglas; "not the one who was in my room, but the fellow we chased down the back line of quarters. I caught a glimpse of his long black hair dancing in the breeze and the shape of his face as he looked back as we were closing up upon him. There is no mistake about it; he is the man."

"That's 'Indian' Kleboe," said Hawkins, "one of the toughest wharf-rats of San Francisco. He lives in this house."

CHAPTER IX

A NEW CLUE

WHAT was to be done?

From the position occupied by the group, Blair Parkinson and his companion were clearly visible through the window, yet he remained entirely unconscious of their presence.

The waiter came in, received an order, and brought back his burden with many quizzical glances at the intruders.

"I don't think we had better make an arrest," said Benedict. "There is no certainty that this man is in the confidence of Westmoreland. In all probability he receives his instructions from Parkinson and merely obeys orders. We would gain little by capturing him; perhaps we would spoil the whole game. We must locate the other fellow and find out, if we can, whose signature was placed on that check before we can make arrests. The thing to do now is to keep this

fellow under observation. Is there any danger of his getting away, Hawkins?"

"Once we locate our man there isn't a rat-hole in San Francisco that can hide him," said Hawkins. "Are you sure he is the man?"

"I am sure," said Douglas.

Hawkins nodded. "He will not get away."

The group ceased talking, and all watched Parkinson as he lounged on the table, his huge form pitched forward and his turtle-like head thrust out toward the half-Indian who sat before him. The words of the famous crook could not be heard, but it was apparent that Kleboe was writhing and turning and seeking to escape like a reptile when his mortal enemy, the mongoose, faces him and demands a settlement of accounts.

Clearly Parkinson was pressing something and Kleboe was striving to avoid an agreement. He shook his head violently and his long black hair danced over his shifting eyes, but Parkinson merely leaned farther forward and pressed his case with such vehemence that the onlookers felt a pity for the poor wretch whose fate he seemed to control.

Finally Parkinson closed his fist and brought it down with a bang upon the table while his huge frame seemed to shake with fury. Kleboe shrank into his corner, but it was apparent that his resistance had been broken. He cringed, nodded, trembled, but clearly promised to obey.

What tribute was Parkinson demanding?

It is truly a kind provision of nature that we cannot know the thoughts of others, otherwise some of the group who sat watching Parkinson would have had reason to tremble for the future. They could only guess, however, and each guessed wrong.

"Well, we've got that one spotted," said Hawkins quietly. "Let us get out and search for the other. Kleboe will never get away."

He rose and opened a door leading into the hall. All quietly followed him out into the street in whose dark alleys crime constantly lurked and into which a good influence but seldom entered.

Douglas again glanced up at the building in which Indian Kleboe and Roland McGrew lived—one a criminal, preying on his fellow men, the other striving to fight his way to

the clean atmosphere beyond this soul-destroying district.

"Roland must know him," thought Douglas. "Perhaps he can help in keeping track of this fellow," and then the thought which had come to him when he saw Blair Parkinson watching the door of the Phelan Building flashed back into his mind. What might happen to Roland McGrew if Blair Parkinson and his followers should discover that he was, in the parlance of the street, "peaching on the gang"?

Yet how could these men suspect a mere boy? There was safety in his humble position, in his youthful appearance, and perfectly controlled expression, always observing, yet never seeming to observe. Thus reasoning, Douglas dismissed the thought of danger to Roland and silently followed Hawkins and Benedict through the streets.

The way led into the sections inhabited by the Chinese and Japs and back again into the haunts of Indian Kleboe, but no trace was found of the man with the scarred hand, nor did the description which Douglas gave of him conform closely to that of any of the

professional crooks who inhabited the district.

It was after midnight when Hawkins was satisfied, and halted at a corner for consultation.

"There is no chance," said he, "that we will find our man to-night. I think we'd better go home. To-morrow I will receive reports from a number of confidential assistants, and in all probability we will get track of our man within forty-eight hours. Before I go to bed I will put a shadower on the track of Indian Kleboe and hereafter we will know his movements better than Kleboe will know them himself. Kleboe will forget, but his shadow will not. Kleboe has no brains. He is nothing in this game. The man we must look out for is Blair Parkinson, the shrewdest crook in San Francisco. He has graduated from the class which actually commits crimes. He now merely manages such fellows as Kleboe."

"Like Westmoreland," laughed Rory. "Yes, he is just the mercuric fulminate for this explosive."

"I will call you on the 'phone at your office

to-morrow if anything turns up," said Benedict, and he and Hawkins moved off into the darkness.

Douglas and Rory turned toward the boat landing. The night's work had not been devoid of results, and the confidence expressed by Hawkins in his ability to find the man with the scarred hand led to the hope that the whole situation would soon be cleared up.

It was too late to return to the Fort by the regular boat, but as Douglas had assured his mother and sister that he would be at home he felt he must find a way of crossing.

"There is an old fellow who keeps row-boats and motor-boats down near the foot of Market Street," said Douglas, "and we can hire a boat from him. Let us look him up."

After many inquiries the boat-house of old Dennis Moriority was found, and even the interesting person of Dennis himself, who was laboriously housing a boat for the night.

After much haggling over the price, Dennis agreed to let a boat for a trip to the Fort, and to allow it to remain all night on condition that it be returned early the next morning.

The details finally arranged, the two young officers stepped into the boat and pushed off. Neither knew much about the art of rowing, but both were strong and willing, and responding to their combined efforts the boat sped rapidly out into the bay.

The moon was less than a half hour above the western horizon and the shadows of the surrounding hills reached far out across the water almost to the wharves and enveloped the greater portion of the bay in darkness. Between these dark shadows the moonlight lay upon the calm surface of the water like a silver sheet, interrupted only by the dark irregular outline of Angel Island, where the garrison of Fort McDowell lay peacefully sleeping. Here the battalion to which Douglas belonged lived the simple army life, far from those worries of money-getting which robbed such men as Westmoreland of all humane attributes and made him soulless as a machine. True, the army possessed its share of moral failures. The military prison, which raised its dark turrets above the outline of Alcatraz, bore sufficient testimony to that. Each year it received its consignment

of convicts, and each year opened its gates and sent them out into the world.

Rory glanced back toward the wharves which they had left with the lights of the city behind, and thought of the slums they had traversed that night.

"San Francisco must be filled with convicts discharged from Alcatraz," said he musingly. "There is nothing that compels them to leave the city, is there?"

"No," said Douglas. "They leave the island and we see no more of them. I don't know how many go out, but no doubt a great many remain in the city."

"And live in the slums we inspected to-night," added Rory, and both lapsed into silence.

They had ceased rowing and were lying quietly on the calm surface of the bay watching the tranquil scene about them. The creak of an oar in a rowlock came distinctly to their ears from the dark shadow of Alcatraz, which stretched across the bay, for the moon was now close to the horizon, and its light was thrown almost parallel to the water's surface.

For a moment the two young friends lis-

tened intently to the steady strokes of a single oarsman, whose boat seemed to be bearing well to their flank and coming from the direction of the Fort.

"Quite unusual, isn't it, that boatmen should be on the bay at this hour?" said Rory, in a low tone.

"Yes," said Douglas. "I know of no one on the post who owns a boat, and yet the man seems to be coming from Alcatraz."

"It may be a fisherman out for night work," thought Douglas, but nevertheless he resumed rowing with a distinct feeling that he would like to know more about the boat and its occupants. Every one has at times a sense of something escaping him, yet feels powerless to arrest its escape. The boat was too far away, and Douglas and Rory too inexperienced with the oars to warrant pursuit.

Reluctantly they turned the nose of the boat toward the island and pulled away on the oars. In silence the two made the boat fast and walked slowly up to quarters.

Opening the door gently, they mounted to the room Douglas had left that evening and entered. Even in the darkness there was a

feeling of disorder entirely out of keeping with the tidiness which Douglas always observed, but when he turned on the light a startling spectacle met his gaze. Every drawer in the room had been opened, his trunk had been ransacked, and the contents lay dumped upon the floor. His letters were scattered about and even the pockets of his clothing hanging in the closets had been turned inside out.

The two officers stood gazing at the disorder which the invader had wrought. Then they burst into laughter.

"Luck was with us, Rory," said Douglas, "when we decided to turn that check over to Benedict for safe keeping. It would be back in Westmoreland's possession to-morrow if we had not. This gives us the advantage, and we must keep it."

He thrust his hand into his pocket. The photos were all there. He slapped Rory on the back and standing in the midst of his disordered room, twice burglarized inside of forty-eight hours, he laughed as if the most fortunate event of his life had happened.

"We have Westmoreland on the run," he added. "The fact that Benedict is handling

the business for us, that we went together to police headquarters, must have decided him that he has made a mistake, and that he must get back the check at all hazards. Perhaps we have underestimated the importance of that signature," and Douglas gazed again at the inscrutable combination of letters which he had photographed at the bottom of the check.

The scrawl defied analysis, and he put the papers back into his pocket. "I had a feeling," he went on, "that the boat we heard in the bay had important freight aboard. It is dollars to doughnuts that the same pair came back during our absence and raided the room in search of the check. Indian Kleboe got all the experience he wanted on the first trip, but Blair Parkinson forced him to come back. The other fellow with the scar in his hand was with him, no doubt; and see here, Rory—those boats must be rented from old Dennis Moriority. These two came from the island each time in rowboats and got away in the same manner, and Mr. Dennis Moriority is probably the only man on the bay who rents such boats."

"More clues," said Rory, enthusiastically. "Dennis knows who used his boats, and we can pump him to-morrow."

Together they set to work rearranging the room and putting back the disordered garments into their proper places. A suit of civilian's clothing was gone, also a few dollars, which lay in the top of the trunk with some small trinkets of little value, but aside from this no articles in the room had been taken.

"They were afraid to attempt carrying away luggage," said Douglas, "but look at this."

He stood in front of the picture representing the death of Bill Smathers, "the queer fellow," on the banks of the Quingua in the Philippines. It had been slashed clean across with a sharp edged knife.

Douglas and Rory looked at the piece of vandalism long and earnestly. By what small things criminals sometimes accomplish their own destruction. In selecting this one object in the room on which to vent his malice the criminal declared his hatred for Bill Smathers in particular, or for soldiers in general, or, barely possible, for Douglas himself, though

had he borne special ill-will against the latter he would have damaged his property to the full extent of his power instead of selecting a single unimportant thing for destruction.

"Yes," said Douglas, "we have him classified now. I think I will find out to-morrow what Klondyke Jones thinks of the incident. He knew Bill Smathers better than any other man in the army."

It was nearly two o'clock when Douglas and Rory went to bed, after deciding that nothing would be said on the post about the second visit of the burglars. It was highly improbable that the garrison would again be invaded, and no good could come of airing the matter further. Thoroughly exhausted from the work of the day, they were both soon asleep, and it was late the next morning before they awoke and came down to breakfast.

Excitement had subsided, and not a word was said about the occurrence of the night except that Douglas gave a brief description of the visit through the slums, omitting all reference to the discovery of Indian Kleboe and the surroundings in which they found him.

"Well, I have some news for you," said Gertrude, when the interesting narrative had been finished. "There is to be a hop to-night, and Lieutenant and Mrs. Swayne have invited Alice Dryden to come with them, and Douglas is expected to escort her to the hop."

"And may I have the pleasure of your company?" said Rory, promptly, always quick to make the situation agreeable to those about him, yet equally quick to improve the opportunity of a very agreeable time for himself.

"Delighted," said Gertrude, and the arrangements were complete.

"I am not going with you this morning, Douglas," said Rory. "Your sister has agreed to let me see guard mounting and watch drill with her, and in the afternoon I am to run over to the city and get Miss Dryden and bring her to Swayne's house. I know you couldn't spare the time from the office, old chap," and Rory patted him gently on the back and chuckled good-naturedly. "Should anything turn up during the day, telephone me and I will come over at once."

Together they walked out upon the porch. Over in front of barracks, F Company was training assiduously in preliminary instruction for target practice; in a corner of the parade-ground a sergeant was drilling a group of recruits; in every direction the work of preparing the army for the defense of the Republic was progressing with clock-like precision, some day possibly to win the appreciation of a careless nation which has never understood its military problem.

Douglas could not now join in the work which always claimed his deepest interest. Duty took him elsewhere. He picked up his hat and left for the office, where a new problem awaited a correct solution, and where he hoped to solve it satisfactorily.

The little boat swept across the bay and brought up smartly at the dock. A half block distant old Dennis Moriority was working about his boat-house, where the boat which Douglas and Rory used the night before had been returned, but there was no time to talk to Dennis now concerning the men who had rented his boats, and Douglas hurried up the street toward his office.

At the first corner Westmoreland, dressed in the latest style, and looking as neat as a fashion plate, was awaiting his approach. His men had failed to secure the check and he was forced to take immediate action.

CHAPTER X

DOUGLAS ANNOUNCES HIS PRINCIPLES

THERE was clearly something on Westmoreland's mind as he cheerily greeted Douglas, though he endeavored to affect an appearance of perfect composure.

"Off for your office?" he said smiling.

"Yes," said Douglas, accepting his hand, though he felt like kicking him into the gutter.

"Good. Our paths lie in the same direction. I congratulate myself on having your company."

It would be foolish to resent the man's assurance; one gains nothing by vindictiveness. So Douglas accepted the situation, but made no effort to cut his stride to accommodate that of his untrained companion.

"I didn't mean to intrude upon your time with business affairs, but I presume an energetic man like you does not object to handling the affairs of the nation at odd moments ;

so I venture to inquire how the matter of the bids submitted a few days ago stands with the department," said Westmoreland.

There was little time, and Westmoreland was forced to come to his point with unwonted bluntness. It was difficult to answer him with courtesy, but Douglas managed to reply.

"I am unable to tell you, Mr. Westmoreland. I merely handed the bids over to the chief quartermaster, who came back to duty the day after you interviewed me at the office, and I do not know what action he has taken on the matter."

"I trust he noted the remarkable offer the firm submitted."

"I have no doubt he is giving the matter the very thorough examination which he gives to all matters which come before him."

"That being the case, I take it that the bid which offers such manifest advantages to the government should receive his favorable consideration."

Douglas was silent, and Westmoreland watched him out of the corner of his eye. The pace was rapid and the distance to the office was growing steadily less. It was neces-

sary for Westmoreland to press on to his goal.

"During our pleasant conversation at your office I ventured to suggest that as assistant to the chief quartermaster you might call his attention to the advantages which our bid offers over any other submitted. Of course you can realize the importance of this matter to us. Personally I am deeply interested, as I have urged this operation upon the firm, and know that it is a great financial venture, the greatest we have undertaken in a long time."

"You were impelled, I thought, by patriotism, and not by financial considerations," said Douglas sharply.

"True, Mr. Atwell, but as I told you, we look far into the future, and see some profits even at the dirt-cheap price at which we offer to do this work. The point is, we now need your coöperation to accomplish this great achievement."

It was hard to listen with patience to this man who, he had good reason to believe, had sought to involve him and his family in a piece of low bribery, and had twice sent

criminals to ransack his house, and who at that moment was keeping him under constant observation ; but prudence demanded forbearance, and self-discipline enabled him to maintain it. Besides, he still possessed the evidence against Westmoreland, and could afford to be affable for the present. He therefore replied with no show of feeling, " I regret that I cannot help you, Mr. Westmoreland. As I said before, the matter is in the hands of the chief quartermaster, who, of course, will handle the business impartially, I assure you."

Westmoreland's jaws tightened. He merely wondered how much this thing was going to cost him. He stood ready to cash the \$25,000 check, but he must be assured that the money would be profitably spent. Manifestly then, he thought, it was necessary to reach a definite understanding at once.

" Of course," he said, " I cannot ask your assistance as a personal friend, because I have not had the pleasure of knowing you directly. We are putting this on a business basis, and it is presumed that you realize that we are ready to meet any reasonable—expense—that

you might suffer in securing acceptance of this bid."

"I think you have made that point clear," said Douglas quietly.

They walked half a block before Westmoreland spoke again. He had concluded in this brief space of time that proposals must now be put on the basis of bids and purchase price.

"You decline our offer then?" said he cautiously.

"Emphatically."

Mr. Westmoreland had considered that he was dealing with a high priced man, and as time was an all important factor now he felt he must at once propose the maximum which could win and still declare a princely dividend upon the investment.

"Mr. Atwell," said he, "I am taking a step now which few business men would advocate, but I am playing with great enterprises and my people are generous. The firm of Jacobs, Sharp & Co. authorizes me to say that if this bid is accepted you may join the firm as a silent partner, and become independent for life. We will arrange the details at your convenience."

Douglas felt his cheeks burn with the hot blood which surged up into them, and his fingers itched to seize this low trafficker in men by the throat and choke him till he begged for mercy. The effect of Westmoreland's proposed scheme flashed with lightning-like rapidity through his mind. He saw the city with its poor district rendered poorer; its vice increased; its crimes multiplied; its municipal history stained by a record of graft and corruption as compared with which the corruption of Rome was insignificant, and he was asked to become promoter of the scheme and share in its profits.

"Mr. Westmoreland," said he, "please understand my point of view. I could not help you if I would, but I would not help you to push through the corrupt scheme which your firm proposed for all the money they ever hope to steal, much less to pay out in bribes. I despise your grafting and dishonest outfit, and not only will not help you, but will do everything I can to oppose you. I have treated your advances with courtesy because I was never absolutely sure of your attitude, but now it is clear, and you know where I

stand. I am from West Point, and you can't buy me; and what is more, don't try it again."

Westmoreland stood complacently rapping his trousers leg with his cane, while his face exhibited only the concern a business man displays when his projects are going wrong.

"I see," he said. "But what leads you to think that the proposal is corrupt?"

Douglas realized at once that he had spoken indiscreetly, that he had been uttering aloud the conclusions which Benedict had told him to guard most carefully; that his words indicated he had in short learned more than Westmoreland dreamed was known by any man. The full extent of his knowledge must be concealed from Westmoreland, however, otherwise Benedict's chances of conducting a successful prosecution would be blocked forever.

"If your schemes are not corrupt," answered Douglas, "why did you try to bribe me; why did you propose admitting me to membership in your firm, when you know that I am totally unfit for such a trust, if you did not intend to push through a dishonest scheme? Your bid

would win on its merits if it were honest, and you back it with bribes because you know it cannot win in any other way."

Mr. Westmoreland listened attentively to the end to the vehement utterance of the indignant young officer; then he laughed and said, "Well, I see we cannot get on. I wanted to see you win out, because I thought you were of the kind which wins, but you decline to see it my way, so we will let the matter drop. The fight can be carried elsewhere and your name removed completely from connection with the case. I will therefore ask you to return the check which you received by registered mail a few days ago and we will forget that you were concerned in this matter. I regret that I offended you."

"That is very kind of you, Mr. Westmoreland, but I prefer to retain that check."

Mr. Westmoreland's teeth snapped, the lines in his face deepened, and his lips curled sneeringly. "Why?" he said quietly.

"That is my affair," said Douglas.

"I anticipated that line of boyish conduct when this matter was under consideration, Mr. Atwell, and caused a receipt to be secured

for the letter containing the check. I presume also that you appreciate the fact that presentation of the check at the bank on which it was drawn suggests some unpleasant things which you would not like have become public."

"I realize this, Mr. Westmoreland, that you are a fashionable thief, a successful black-mailer, a sneak and a coward ; that you would not hesitate at anything if you thought you would get away with a whole skin, but let me tell you something—if you attempt the plan you suggest you will need more ex-convicts than Blair Parkinson to save your hide from a tanning every time you step outside of your door. Most cowards don't like that sort of a thing."

"So it's war, is it?"

"As you please," replied Douglas.

They had arrived opposite the lofty building into which Westmoreland had his office, and stood glaring at each other upon the sidewalk. Westmoreland's face twitched and his eyes shone green like a cat's in the darkness, but he forced a smile to his lips and replied, "Oh, very well. You will learn more as you

grow older, perhaps," and he turned toward the door of his office.

Roland McGrew, dressed better than Douglas had ever seen him before, passed them with his eyes straight to the front, and sped in an elevator to the top of the building. He was office boy for the firm of which Mr. Westmoreland was a member.

Douglas resumed his walk toward the office. He had declared his intentions, and henceforth he could expect nothing but open hostility from Westmoreland. The outburst of feeling was possibly very unwise, but in view of all that Westmoreland knew or could readily guess it seemed folly to conceal his intentions further. Whether wise or unwise, however, Douglas had announced his principles, and Westmoreland knew that there were some men at least who could not be bought.

"No," he mused, as he ascended to his office, "I can't buy him. Money appears to have no attraction for the young man, but just the same he has his price. Those stupid things Parkinson sent for the check failed to get it, but before I finish with Mr. Atwell

he will be willing to pay me to take it back. He poses as an officer and a gentleman—ah, that is the spot. Money is not precious, but honor, reputation, and family ties are. It is sad to be forced to attack a man on such ideals, but business is business. He will be begging for mercy like all the rest inside of a month.”

Westmoreland stepped out on the landing and walked thoughtfully to his room. Roland McGrew hovered about his desk dusting it, arranging the books with scrupulous care, and watching as the hungry hawk watches his prey for some indication of the thing he sought. Westmoreland had never had an office boy half so attentive. But across the street, brooding and sullen, sat another lad watching the building for a glimpse of the boy who had succeeded him. He had been discharged for negligence, and Roland McGrew had taken his place. And while Westmoreland, seated at his desk, received his reports unmindful of the keen eyes upon him, Roland McGrew was equally unconscious of the fragment of humanity across the street which waited for him to emerge from the door below.

Equally absorbed in his thoughts, Douglas entered his office and resumed his task, but his mind felt relieved of a great burden. He had declared himself and felt free, but how would Benedict feel? He went to the 'phone and told him all that had happened—the condition in which he found his room, his meeting with Westmoreland, and as much of the conversation as it was discreet to repeat.

Benedict groaned. "You are certainly a fine pair of assistants, you and O'Connor. If you keep on helping me for another week they will have me jailed or assassinated. Can't you learn to disguise your feelings a little, fake a bit, and wait for your opportunity? Why, if you were a lawyer you would starve."

Douglas promised to do his best; until the information which they sought could be secured it was necessary to be cautious, and to encourage confidence in their opponents. So long as the check remained in their possession the advantage remained with them, and new efforts to regain his position were soon to be expected from Westmoreland.

The morning passed without unusual occur-

rence. Douglas lunched with Benedict and they talked over their experiences thoroughly, and agreed upon plans for the future.

"Hawkins called a few moments ago," said Benedict, "and said he could report no progress in the search for the man with the scarred hand. No one knows that Hawkins is in my employ, so he was able to get possession of all the finger print records on file, but no record exists which corresponds with the fellow whom we want. The description of Indian Kleboe was so accurate that Hawkins was able to lead us direct to his hang-out, but he cannot locate the other fellow. Either he has not been recorded in San Francisco or else some one has abstracted the records to protect him, but if he is in the city we will get him finally."

Douglas went back to his work, and plodded away all the rest of the afternoon. His plans for construction work were developing nicely, and he derived great pleasure from seeing the rough outline of hills change to well regulated lines of barracks and quarters with streets and walks and water systems all symmetrically arranged. His first outlines

were completed, and he was ready to begin the work on the details of construction when the official day closed and he left the office.

It was a beautiful clear afternoon, and Douglas preferred walking to the boat landing. He arrived ten minutes ahead of the hour for regular trips of the boat, and as he stood gazing down the line of wharves he noted the stooped shoulders of old Dennis Moriority as he tugged at a boat partially resting in the surf. Douglas hurried to his side and helped him pull up the boat.

"You are getting a little old for this kind of work, Dennis, especially as you have to sit up so late at night for people to come back with the boats."

"Yes, yes," said Dennis, "I do be havin' to stay up purty late betimes."

"I kept your boat out longer than I expected, so here is fifty cents for the extra time," said Douglas.

"Thank ye, thank ye, sir," said Dennis.

"By the way, who was with Indian Kleboe when he crossed the bay the other night?"

"Sure it was—uh, uh—uh—sure I don't know—why do ye be after askin'?"

"Oh, no matter, Dennis," said Douglas smiling; "I merely wanted to know," and he went away sure that if other means should fail old Dennis Moriority could probably supply the information desired. It would be dangerous to urge the old boatman to tell any of the secrets of his trade. He could easily warn the men concerned and their flight would destroy all chance of success. It was better to wait. The reply of the old boatman was an acknowledgment of the fact that Indian Kleboe had crossed the bay in a boat and that he was accompanied by another man. This was sufficient for the present.

Douglas crossed the bay in a happy frame of mind and walked rapidly to his quarters. Rory had returned from San Francisco with Alice Dryden, whom he had left at Lieutenant Swayne's quarters, and was now comfortably seated upon the front porch with Gertrude—and both seemed perfectly happy. They were too much interested to be disturbed, and Douglas left them after a moment and went to his room.

His evening dress suit was already spread out upon the bed, where Gertrude had placed

it for him in anticipation of the hop and the room was a model of tidiness, "notwithstanding the invasions by Westmoreland's interesting friends," mused Douglas.

He glanced up at the picture representing the death of Bill Smathers, the queer fellow, which had been slashed across the face. "So your record is not in San Francisco. Then where is it?"

He leaned back in his chair and thought long and earnestly upon the question.

The tinkle of the bell for dinner brought him out of his study, and he went down with some conclusions fairly well fixed in his mind.

Roderick and Gertrude did all of the talking, and Douglas listened, amused and interested, and left the table, hoping that the accident which had brought his good friend and classmate to his humble dwelling might result in happiness for all concerned.

At a quarter to eight the entire party, dressed for the hop, left for Swayne's quarters, where Alice Dryden was awaiting their arrival in the parlor with Mrs. Swayne. Douglas saw the girl through the window and at once turned away in his gaze. For some

reason he felt as nervous as on that first night at West Point when he met her, radiant and sparkling, in the hall of the hotel when he had expected to find a poor little old maid forlorn and unattractive. They met now in the parlor and as she received his hand she said, "I am so glad that you could come to-night. This is to be our last hop."

"Why the last?" he said anxiously.

"I expect to return to the East before the end of next week. Papa's business calls him back."

Douglas was groping for appropriate words as he helped her adjust her wraps, and felt a sense of impending loss creep over him which he tried vainly to resist.

"Must your going terminate—everything?" he asked gently.

But Alice danced over to the mirror, and no dear little girl ever became so busy as she in adjusting curls and laces and wraps which were not in the slightest need of adjustment, and when she came back her eyes were sparkling, but she was talking about everything except that sad return to the East.

It was useless for Douglas to attempt break-

ing through that intangible barrier which she so ingeniously maintained about the subject as they walked to the hop room and when the music started for the first dance they glided away together, the subject still untouched.

There was no doubt that Alice enjoyed it. She gladly gave him the greatest number of dances which she might without conspicuously favoring him, and when the evening was over she had furnished him sufficient reason to regret the possibility that this might be their last hop.

They walked back to Swayne's quarters and stood talking for a moment in the light of the same beautiful moon which on the previous night had hung over the bay and the slums which he and Rory had invaded in search of criminals.

Alice stood upon the steps of the porch and gazed down upon his broad shoulders, adorned so handsomely by the gold shoulder knots of his special evening dress. She had stopped his every effort to return to the subject of her departure and now of her own sweet will she returned to it.

"Shall I see you again before I leave?" she said.

"Yes," said Douglas. "May I not call for you to-morrow afternoon for a walk in the park after office hours—and when you are leaving may I see you off in the train?"

She listened with astonishment. He had actually exceeded the invitation and was taking the initiative, instead of she. This was so great a concession that she felt like declining. Perhaps she had gained the mastery after all, but she could not be sure; she would find that out during the walk.

"That will be fine," she said simply. "I love walking. Good-night."

Douglas turned down the walk toward his house. In front of his door stood a small figure with coat collar turned up and hat pulled down over his eyes. Douglas was about to pass when a low voice called "Evening papers! Evening papers!" and Douglas stopped in his tracks. Little Roland McGrew stood before him.

"I've got what you wanted to know," said Roland. "A box of papers, with the signature you gave me, are in Mr. Westmoreland's safe."



**"I'VE GOT WHAT YOU WANTED
TO KNOW."**

CHAPTER XI

ROLAND REPORTS AND DOUGLAS ENJOYS A WALK IN THE PARK

ROLAND MCGREW had made the great discovery by means of which Douglas hoped to solve his own problem and to give to Benedict the evidence he needed for the prosecution of his case. But how could the valuable evidence be secured in documentary form? It was necessary to hear the boy's report in detail.

"You have done fine work, Roland," said Douglas. "Come in and we will hear the story from the beginning."

Roland glanced cautiously up and down the walk, but no one seemed to be in sight. His life in the slums had given him the caution of a savage whose existence depends on always seeing before he is seen.

Roland followed Douglas on tiptoe and stood in the hall gazing big-eyed at what seemed to him evidence of great wealth and power and especially of cleanliness. He daily saw men of power and prominence in the

streets, occasionally in their offices, but his business confined his activities principally to the pavements, and seldom did he enter the dwellings of any one except those of the residents in the miserable district in which he lived. It is not surprising then that the boy stood somewhat awed by his surroundings. His eyes wandered from the piano in the parlor and the cross-sabers on the wall and other decorations brought from the Philippines, to the gold shoulder knots of the special evening dress which Douglas wore with such appearance of distinction.

Roderick and Gertrude entered, and Douglas introduced Roland to his sister.

Gertrude held out her hand, and Roland took it shrinkingly, his blue eyes gazing up at her with the same look of wonder and suspicion which invariably flitted across his face on his first contact with a stranger.

"Douglas has told me about you," said Gertrude sweetly. "I hope you are getting along well."

But Roland's eyes merely followed her wonderingly. No woman had ever before shown interest in him except to rebuke him.

Could it be possible that the people of this refined house were actually concerned in his welfare?

Words expressive of his doubts were rising to his lips, but he repressed them and merely stood in silence.

"Come to my room, Roland," said Douglas, "and we will talk it over," and the boy meekly followed the two officers up the stairs, still uncertain as to the meaning of the strange considerations which had been shown him.

On the landing, Gertrude bade them good-night, and Rory and Douglas entered their room and seated themselves with the boy in front of them.

"Now, Roland," said Douglas, "let us hear your whole story."

"Well, sir," said the boy, "I thought the only way I could find out anything was to go to work for Mr. Westmoreland, so I went up and asked for a job. An Italian boy was just being discharged, and I got the place. I was in luck to come just then. I didn't have nothing to do but a little cleaning and carrying messages and telegrams and so on, but I got along all right. It was a cinch.

"I kept remembering that name you gave me, and so I went around Mr. Westmoreland's desk as often as I could, but didn't see nothing. But yesterday morning just after I seen you talking to him in the street, he walked around the office for half an hour and then he called me in. I come right up to his desk and he says, 'Go and get me some postage stamps,' and begins feeling in his pocket for money, and right there in front of him was a pile of papers with red lines down the sides and at the bottom was the name you showed me. I didn't know what was in the papers, but the name was there all right, and I almost forgot what he told me in trying to see. I went off and came back in a hurry. Another man was with him. They were talking about some business, but I couldn't make out what it was. The safe was open, and Mr. Westmoreland went to it and took out more papers and I saw the same name on them. There was a bunch of papers as big as that," and Roland indicated a large package. "I had to go or make some reason for staying, so I jes' pushed an ink-well so that Mr. Westmoreland knocked it on the floor and smashed

it. 'Go and get something to clean it up,' says he, and I skipped for the cleaning stuff. I got a bucket and scrubbing brush and got down on the floor, and you can bet I stuck to my job. They paid no more attention to me.

"A lot more men came in and they all talked about some big job. Westmoreland says, 'The man who has the check won't give it up. He is against us, and I will have to kill him off some way—find something to stop him. You can leave it to me.' They all talked a long time. I didn't know none of them, but finally Westmoreland ties up all the papers and puts them in the safe. I saw the place he put them and know just how the package looks."

"But did you know any of the men?"

"No," said Roland. "Never saw none of them before, but I would know any of them again."

"Well," said Douglas, "you have done great work. It is probable that these papers will settle the whole matter for us, but I don't like to ask you to get them."

Douglas rose and walked up and down the room. It was impossible, of course, to know

what the papers contained, but the opportunity seemed to present itself for making the great capture and of forever destroying Westmoreland's power for evil in San Francisco. But was it honorable for him to commission this boy to take these papers from the office? Possibly they could be secured by legal process, but that would take time. In any event, it was Benedict who wanted them, not he, except in so far as he was interested in the young lawyer's case, and in finding the actual name of the man who signed the check. Roland watched him in surprise. He was not accustomed to hesitate about trifles, and could not well understand why any one should balk at taking a few papers if they were lying about, but he waited for instructions.

"Well, Roland," said Douglas, "I principally want to know who the man is who signed those papers. Do you think you could find that out?"

"There's a fighting chance," said he. "Do you want me to swipe those papers?"

"No," said Douglas, "no, I can't ask that."

"Who wants them?"

"Mr. Benedict, the lawyer," said Douglas.

Roland's blue eyes looked far away for a moment, and then he looked in turn at Douglas and Rory. What thoughts were flying through the small red head could not be guessed, but certain it is he shared none of the misgivings which the two officers felt over the morality of fighting Westmoreland with any weapon which might be available.

"Do you know Indian Kleboe?" asked Douglas bluntly.

Roland recoiled. "Yes," he said; "Indian Kleboe killed my father, but no one could prove it. He and his gang tried to rob dad in the street. Dad fought, and they say Indian Kleboe killed him."

"Well," said Douglas, "you read in the papers that my house was burglarized. Indian Kleboe did it in company with another man," and Douglas went on to describe the latter in detail. "Do you think you know this other fellow, Roland?"

"No," said the boy; "there ain't no fellow like that in the ward. None that I ever saw."

They talked on for half an hour during which Roland gave the history of Indian

Kleboe and others of the gang. He had never seen Blair Parkinson before the day he discovered him on the corner, but knew that he was recognized as the leader of the gang and the most dangerous crook in the city.

"It is too late for you to go back, Roland," said Douglas. "I will fix a place for you, and you can get away on the first boat after breakfast."

Roland looked terrified. "It's all over with me if the gang finds out," he said.

"I will set the alarm to awake me and let you away very early," said Douglas, and the boy finally consented, and was conducted to a room so clean and neat that he could hardly convince himself that it was for use and not just for ornament.

The next morning Douglas woke him at the appointed hour, gave him a hasty breakfast, and saw him step out of the back door and hurry off toward the boat.

The boy reached it and stepped aboard. He sat silent and anxious in a corner, a few newspapers under his arm, and when the boat landed he hurried away along the street toward his home, unnoticed except by one,

and that one was Giuseppi Gatti, the Italian boy whose place he had taken in Westmoreland's office.

Douglas was eager to reach the city as soon as possible. Leaving Rory in bed he sent word to Klondyke Jones to come over that evening at six o'clock, and left at once for the city. It was an hour before the office would open, and he went straight to Benedict's house.

The young lawyer was more than interested in Roland's discovery. "Leave the matter to me; leave it strictly to me," he said. "You are liable to go up and tell Westmoreland what you think of him for having the stuff, and the next day it would be in a safe deposit vault. It was a master stroke to put that boy on the job, but I beseech you, leave the rest to me."

Douglas left for his office, more perplexed and anxious than at any moment since he had become involved in this affair. Events were now pushing him on without any act of his own will. He had started the march but he could not stop it, and Benedict, not he, was in command and deciding on the course of action to pursue. He would gladly have withdrawn

from further connection with the case, but he had told Benedict that he would help, and he must not disregard his promise now.

Douglas went to his office and took up his task where he had left it the day before. The morning passed without unusual incident, and at midday he called Benedict on the 'phone, but the latter was out, and he could get no further information. He lunched at an adjacent restaurant, scarce knowing what he ate, and went back to his office. The long afternoon passed, and at the close of office hours he was glad to get away from the memory of the "case" and started for the great hotel at which Alice Dryden and her father were stopping.

Pursuant to their engagement, Alice was ready, and together they walked out into the fresh afternoon breezes and turned toward Golden Gate Park along Oak Street.

There was just enough chill in the air to make the blood leap with the joy of living and to mantle the cheek with the flush of youth. The buds of early spring were appearing upon trees and shrubbery along Avenue Drive and Mother Nature, preparing

her summer garb, was bidding all her children to come out into the sunlight and be happy.

Under the influence of the enchanting scene and pleasant companionship, Douglas forgot all the worries of his office, the anxiety he had felt concerning the schemes of Westmoreland and the problem which must soon find a solution. For a time he felt decidedly happy, and yet as he walked the announcement which Alice had made only the previous evening that "This would be their last hop" was ringing in his ears.

She glanced at him and noted with a girl's keen intuition that he was struggling with an awkward situation. Now was the time to secure the mastery.

"It is too bad you have to leave—so soon," said Douglas timidly.

"Oh, but I have a host of friends in New York whom I am eager to see," replied Alice.

"But have you no friends here whom you are sorry to leave?"

"That is always—relative," she said, talking away from him while his eyes gazed across the rolling parkland as if this alone were worthy of serious consideration.

Douglas felt a sense of irritation arise within him, and with it an increased desire to know her thoughts.

"Yes, everything is relative," he said, with that touch of decision in his voice which always made her half fear him. "In this case must we believe that New York possesses such advantages over San Francisco that you are glad to leave?"

"Oh, New York is charming, Mr. Atwell, far superior to San Francisco."

"I meant the—friends. To me it is never the place which attracts, but the friends who live in the place. I care nothing for the magnificence of New York or magnificence of any kind. I prefer walking like this in the fresh open air with a friend than automobiling with one who does not attract me, no matter who that person is; do you feel differently?"

She wanted him to talk on. This was the first concession he had ever made.

"I don't know," she said. "It is hard to analyze one's feelings. Do you really regret our leaving?"

"Very much," said Douglas, and then he

caught his breath. Where was this foolishness leading him? Had he not decided to eliminate Alice Dryden from his life? Had he not long ago realized that their worlds were so far apart that no sentiment could ever bridge the distance which separated them? This matter had gone far enough. He lapsed into silence, but Alice was not satisfied.

"Why, will you miss us?" she said.

Douglas groped desperately for something to say which would be courteous but noncommittal, but the words would not come, and in an instant the occasion for a reply had passed, for as they spoke they turned again in the drive and beheld two men standing in earnest conversation. One was Stanhope Everett Westmoreland, the other, Blair Parkinson.

Great as was the surprise, Westmoreland was equal to the occasion.

"Good-evening, Mr. Atwell," said he, doffing his hat; "I was about to despatch a messenger to see you. Here is a letter in which I think you will be interested. Pardon my interruption."

He thrust out a long envelope, and Douglas stood hesitating. His feelings impelled him

to strike down the hand before him, but he could not make a scene, and moreover, Benedict had urged caution and self-control, and he must try to conform.

He received the envelope, thrust it into his pocket, and bowing moved on.

Alice glanced up at him, curiosity expressed in every feature.

"What a strange looking creature with—that gentleman who met you."

"As strange as he looks," said Douglas, and feeling compelled to make some explanation, he added, "The gentleman who just gave me the letter is Mr. Westmoreland, an attorney about town with whom I have had some business relations."

Alice raised her brows. "Mr. Westmoreland—it seems to me I have heard of him before. What a man he was with. Ugh!" She shivered, and again Douglas felt the chills creep over him.

In front of them a big tourist automobile came speeding up the drive, and Alice exclaimed, "Why, it is daddy's machine!"

Mr. Dryden saw them, and reaching over tapped the chauffeur on the shoulder. The

machine swept up beside them, dropping in speed from fifty miles an hour to a dead halt in a space of one hundred yards.

"Jump in," said Mr. Dryden ; " I will take you home." Douglas and Alice mounted to the seat beside him, the door snapped behind them, and the machine shot away like an arrow released from its bow.

" Shall I take you down toward the boat landing ? " asked Mr. Dryden.

" If you please," said Douglas, and he noted the care-worn expression which had settled over the face of this great captain of industry whose position in the business world seemed to be established beyond the possibility of attack.

Almost in silence the party swept on to the boat landing, and as Douglas stepped down he said : " When shall I come to see you off for the East ? "

Alice started. " When shall we leave, papa ? "

Mr. Dryden poked the rugs at the bottom of the machine for a moment as if in deep thought.

" To-morrow evening at eight o'clock," he

said. "Take dinner with us at the hotel at half after six," he added suddenly. "It is the last time I shall be in the West for many years, perhaps."

Douglas felt the color rising to his cheeks. "Thank you," he said; "I shall be glad to come."

The auto rolled away, and Douglas walked down to the boat landing. The boat was waiting at the dock, and he went aboard. The Golden Gate was bathed in the effulgence of the setting sun as the little vessel swung out of her landing place, and turned her nose toward Angel Island.

The beauty, the richness, the color of it all surpassed the most extravagant efforts of the artist's brush, but Douglas was blind to its attractions. He was reading the letter which Westmoreland had handed him.

"I have decided to give you one more opportunity," it ran. "It is presumed that you are aware of the fact that your history is open to the scrutiny of the public, that you have not forgotten that you were tried by general court martial at West Point for conduct unbecoming a cadet and a gentleman,

and that you escaped a conviction by methods which you would not like to have exposed. It may be interesting to you to know that your ancestry has been examined into and that a stain rests upon your immediate relatives which, if made public, would prevent their association with decent society, and make your further career as an officer impossible. We hope you will not force us to bring your sister's name before a public anxious to degrade her; that you will realize that we do not wish to be compelled to resort to any of these methods in order to protect ourselves from the foolish action you seem to contemplate.

"You know the remedy. We await your decision."

The letter was typewritten, and was unsigned.

Douglas folded the letter and put it back into his pocket. Had he a right to go on when the names of his mother and sister might be dragged into the lime-light and disgraced by a scandal-loving public?

As he approached his quarters, he heard Gertrude's voice floating out over the parade-

ground as she sat at the piano and sang Alice Dryden's favorite melody, "The Land of the Leal."

How could he risk any harm to her, no matter how remote? He stood irresolute, full of anger, dread and bitter resentment.

A footstep sounded on the sidewalk and he looked up to see Corporal Klondyke Jones approaching with head up and shoulders erect. The "ole sojer" was reporting in obedience to Douglas' message sent him that morning before he left for the office.

Douglas stepped down from the porch to meet him, and for a half hour they talked over the occurrences which resulted in the slashing of Bill Smathers' picture by the man whose finger prints were undoubtedly left on the window sill.

Douglas took the photograph from his pocket and held up the print of the hand with its scar across the index and second fingers and running into the palm.

Klondyke studied it for a moment, and then he said, "That 'ere's as good as a picture o' his face. It's Tom Jenkins, the fellow that

was bobtailed over two years back, and got out o' Alcatraz¹ a few months ago."

"My old striker," exclaimed Douglas.
"By Jove, I believe you are right."

"I'll bet the best team of mules in Missouri that he's your man," said Klondyke. "I kin lay hands on him inside o' twenty-four hours."

¹ Alcatraz Island—Place of confinement of military convicts.

CHAPTER XII

THE ARRESTS

AFTER making his announcement that the man with the scarred hand was none other than Tom Jenkins, ex-soldier and ex-convict, Klondyke Jones left to verify his statement, and promised to return at ten o'clock that night. Time was precious and every day which was allowed to pass while Indian Kleboe and Jenkins remained at liberty increased the chance of their ultimate escape and increased the probability that Westmoreland would avoid the consequence of his acts. It was necessary to act quickly.

Douglas saw the "ole sojer" hurry off toward the landing, and then he entered his quarters and joined Rory and Gertrude in the parlor.

They had had an interesting day about the post and were in high spirits. Guard mounting, company and battalion drills were followed with preliminary target practice, and

in the afternoon a brisk horseback ride completed a pleasant day full of interest and entertainment.

Douglas remained a quiet listener to his sister's spirited conversation, and as ten o'clock approached he went to the porch and awaited the arrival of Corporal Klondyke Jones.

The "ole sojer," punctual as usual, appeared at the appointed hour and Douglas led him to his office, where Rory joined him.

"Well," said Douglas eagerly, as soon as they had entered, "how about Jenkins?"

"Jes' as I said," replied Klondyke. "He's your man. He left Alcatraz three months back, an' has been around San Francisco ever since. The lieutenant must remember him?"

"Yes," said Douglas; "he worked for me just after I joined the regiment, and in that way he came to know all about the house. Though he seemed to do his work well, I didn't think he was trustworthy, and was not at all surprised when he deserted. Later I learned that he had been apprehended and that he had been tried, convicted, and sentenced to confinement at Alcatraz Island.

I never saw him again until the night I caught him here in my room, but it did not occur to me that he was my old striker in the early days, and yet there was something about him as I saw him there beside my table which reminded me of one I had known.

“How did you trail him, Corporal Jones?”

“Well, sir, I knowed Jenkins mighty well. He joined the regiment in the Philippines jest before the lieutenant joined it as a recruit, and he was with us on the 5th of February in '99 when we made that big charge on Blockhouse No. 14. I reckon the lieutenant will never forget that 'ere day when the bullets flew like hailstones, and the sun almost fried us where we lay in the rice paddy. Tom Jenkins was only a recruit, but when that 'ere line rose to charge Tom he was with it, and when we struck the trench Tom fought, sir, like a demon. There never was no coward in Tom Jenkins. But he was always cantankerous, and you couldn't take it outen him. He couldn't do straight duty, and one night on outpost Bill Smathers was in charge of a cossack post in front of Malolos where the insurrectos was thick as bees in every bush in front. Jenkins

he left his post, and Bill Smathers up and accuses him of cowardice. Jenkins sat in the rice paddy for a minute, and then he drops his rifle and walks straight out into the bamboo with nothing but his bayonet. He hadn't gone one hundred paces before a half dozen was around him and Tom was fightin' for his life. When Bill Smathers reached him he was hangin' on death grip to a bolo with one hand while he clung fast to the throat of an insurrecto with the other.

"Bill Smathers saved him, but from that day forward they was mortal enemies. That grip that Jenkins took on the native's bolo saved his life, but it left a scar that brands him like a mark on a mule. He can't never shed it. Jenkins couldn't stand straight soldierin'. As soon as the war was over he jumped the game and deserted. Times got hard and Jenkins thought he would try it again. He jined your company, and seein' that you didn't recognize him he stood to his post, but one of the old fellows of the company came to Frisco, and Jenkins seen that the jig was up and cut for high timber. They caught him, bobtailed him and sent him to

Alcatraz, and to-day he is hanging out in San Francisco, working occasionally, but always full o' the same old tricks."

"They will have a complete record at Alcatraz," said Douglas. "Perhaps we could get it."

"I will go over to-morrow, if you like, Dug," said Rory, "so as not to interfere with your work at the office, and later I will cross to the city and tell you what luck we have had."

"Thank you, Rory. That will let me tell Benedict all about our discovery, and possibly he will be willing to take action to-morrow."

Klondyke left Jenkins' address in the city, gave the detailed physical description of the man as shown in the company records, and left, assuring Douglas that he would be glad to help "to corner the critter if his services were needed."

The next morning Douglas caught the first boat to the city. The time for arresting Indian Kleboe and Bill Jenkins seemed to have arrived, but he could not take action until Benedict was willing for fear of prejudicing the latter's case. Eager as he was, he was no more eager than Benedict, who

stood at the door of the Phelan Building and awaited his arrival.

Benedict's face beamed with delight as Douglas approached. "I've got it," he whispered, seizing Douglas by the arm.

"What have you got?"

"Everything; everything I have been working for for three long years. The whole combination is laid bare. I have been able to connect up the story of municipal graft for ten years back; to connect up the operations of the leaders, and to-day I stand ready to prosecute. Big names are involved, and to-morrow the city of San Francisco will be treated to a sensation. We make the arrests to-night."

"Do you want Westmoreland and his associates?"

"Yes, every one connected with the business. There are others, but I am going to keep that a dead secret. The government has nothing to do with the case, as I told you. The bid gave only the necessary clue to the proper depository of information and helped me to a solution. They will never be mentioned, except that it will be necessary to

establish the identity of the persons who attempted to bribe you in order to prove the rest of my case. The check we hold is the most valuable piece of evidence that could have possibly fallen into my hands. Westmoreland was crazy to let it be used, and possibly he realizes that fact now, but it is too late."

"He seems to realize it. Look at this," and Douglas handed to Benedict the typewritten letter which Westmoreland had given him in the park the day before.

"It is all bluff, Atwell," said the latter, as he finished reading. "No doubt Westmoreland would do all he says if he could, but after to-day he will be fighting to stay out of prison instead of trying to blackmail you into giving up the evidence against him. Stand pat, my boy, and we will come out all right."

"I think we have located the man with the scarred hand," went on Douglas, and he related the story which Klondyke Jones had told him of Tom Jenkins and his present whereabouts. "Of course we could find no record of the man in San Francisco. He is not known to the police here, but Alcatraz will

have his record, and by noon to-day we should have him exactly located. I will 'phone you as soon as I know."

"Everything is ready," said Benedict. "Hawkins is waiting for the word. At the same moment Indian Kleboe, Blair Parkinson, Westmoreland and your man Jenkins, if he turns out to be the fellow we want, will be arrested, and with them the others involved. Oh, it will be the biggest thing that Frisco has seen for a long time," and Benedict chuckled as happily as a schoolboy.

"But how did you get the evidence?" said Douglas.

"Well," said he, "Mr. Westmoreland was careless once too often. The details are strictly confidential, and I cannot divulge them."

Douglas flushed hotly. "I hope that no one is involved in—questionable conduct due to anything that I told you."

"You gave me clues," said Benedict. "I worked them out. There is no cause for worry. I am doing nothing which I could not do by strictly legal process."

Douglas did not feel satisfied, but he was

no lawyer, and he was not prepared to dispute a lawyer's methods. He could leave it to Westmoreland and Benedict to fight out their campaign for supremacy according to their own methods. With this he was not concerned, except loyally to play the part which he had agreed to play, but he must join in the conflict with vigor in anything which concerned his personal relations with Westmoreland.

"All right," said Douglas, "I leave it to you, only you know how I feel about it. When this thing is over there should be nothing to regret."

Benedict nodded. "I agree with you," he said. "Please 'phone me when you get word about your ex-soldier man, and we will have everything ready for the crash by noon to-day. We pull the string this evening, and San Francisco will feel like an earthquake center. You'd better not be mixed up in the affair at all. Arrests, handcuffs and police courts are nasty things at best. Just let me know where to find your man ; I will do the rest."

"That is entirely agreeable to me," said Douglas.

Benedict hurried off to perfect his plans, and Douglas went to his office. Only a few days had passed since he entered this building, yet in those few days events had crowded upon each other with the rapidity of action of a battle-field. What was to come next? What would be Westmoreland's next move when he found himself a prisoner accused of crime? In this shifting of the scene, would Douglas drop out of the arena and leave Benedict and Westmoreland alone to settle their differences according to the laws of the arena, where, as a rule, might makes right?

Douglas ardently hoped that he might avoid being drawn into the impending conflict and felt that this would be the case, but fate had decreed it otherwise. On the contrary, the next half-day's developments were destined to bring him face to face with the deciding problem of his whole career, and to try his mettle and his courage as they were never tried before.

Ignorant of the magnitude and importance of the problem which was developing about him, Douglas took up his plans and specifications for government construction, almost

happy in the belief that the case was settled, so far as he was concerned, and that Westmoreland's attention would be too completely absorbed in the greater issues at stake to pay further attention to an obscure lieutenant of the army. Three hours had passed in the quiet corner in which he sat when Rory O'Connor arrived.

"Finest thing in the world, Dug," said he; "felt as if I were in a picture gallery. There was our man recorded at Alcatraz,—size, color, dimensions, scars, marks and outline card, with that bolo cut across his hand described with a nicety which would satisfy the most exacting.

"After finishing at Alcatraz Corporal Jones and I came over to the city, and Klondyke, all fixed up in cits, made a trip through the district in which Jenkins lives. The 'ole sojer' found him, and within half an hour we had his alias, Bill Perkins instead of Tom Jenkins, and I lit out for your office, and here I am. There is no doubt about the chap. We can get him in half an hour."

"Fine, Rory, fine," said Douglas. "I think we'd better locate Benedict and tell him. It

isn't safe at this stage of the game to use the 'phone."

"Suppose we call him up, take him out for lunch and celebrate this event properly before it comes off."

"All right," said Douglas. "I feel as happy as a plebe on the 12th of June.¹ Let us celebrate."

He called Benedict on the 'phone, made the necessary arrangement, and he and Rory left the office.

The familiar call of Roland McGrew was lacking, and the surveillance of Blair Parkinson had apparently ceased. Westmoreland and his men felt as secure in their position as did Douglas and Roderick. Like armies, each ignorant of the presence of the other in the theater of operations, an inexcusable situation which nevertheless frequently exists, each side had relaxed and was ready to rejoice in prospects of early victory.

Full of exuberant spirits, Douglas and Rory met Benedict at the café of a large hotel from which the banking house of Shelton, Love

¹ The end of the year at West Point, when the "plebe," or first year cadet, becomes a "yearling."

& Co. was visible, where at that very moment Westmoreland sat in consultation with his associates and confidently assured them of the success of his plans. Had either of these two groups been able to see beyond the veil which separates the present from the future, what scenes they would have beheld enacted upon this very spot, where an epoch in the history of this great city was to be written in a never-to-be-forgotten manner.

"Well," said Benedict, "I feel easy to-day for the first time after three years of constant work on what seemed to be a losing proposition, and I can thank you and Atwell for it all. It was good fortune which brought me into your office that big day on which you were acting chief quartermaster, and I got my direction of attack. Since then your help has made the whole thing so easy that it seems like picking up money in the street. Over there in the Shelton-Love Building Westmoreland thinks he has a strong box containing the original confidential documents which have passed for the last two months between Westmoreland and his people, but instead he has a package of newspapers

and I have the documents. How did it happen?"

Benedict leaned back in his chair and shook with hearty laughter. "Some day, perhaps, I will tell you, but now let us get to work on the lunch."

They ordered a generous lunch, and laughed over the remembrances of college and cadet days and no one could imagine that any one of them had a care in the world to disturb him.

"Well," said Benedict, rising, "you boys may go home to-night and sleep tight. I will tell you all about it in the morning."

"Good luck," said Douglas. "We leave it all to you."

They parted and Rory left for Fort McDowell, while Douglas returned to the office.

Until the following day, there would, he thought, be nothing of interest, except the departure of the Drydens for the East.

That event, he reflected, must be treated as a matter of routine, an occurrence to which no special significance could be attached, an incident in the shifting scenes of life which demanded the customary but meaningless ex-

pressions of regret recognized as fitting in good society, nothing more.

He left his office a very self-satisfied philosopher, and returned to the island. "Little Sis," knowing of his intended visit to the city to take dinner with the Drydens, had his best suit of "cits" laid out on his couch, collar set aside, cuff buttons adjusted and every detail of the appropriate dress for the occasion carefully attended to.

"You will find everything ready, 'Brod,'" she said as he mounted the stairs, and the family went to dinner.

While Douglas dressed, he heard her merry peals of laughter, his mother's low tone through the dining-room, and Rory's steady stream of anecdotes, which never seemed more interesting than this night, "while I," mused Douglas, "am going to the city to eat a formal dinner, express formal regrets, and bow myself out of Alice Dryden's world."

"I will be back before ten o'clock," he said, as he passed the parlor and hurried on to catch the boat.

The ride to the city under the moon and stars with the little boat plowing up the silver

erected foam was very exhilarating, and he reached the dock forgetful of all else except the possibilities of this last occasion on which he would meet the Drydens. He reached the hotel just as they descended. Both Alice and her father were simply dressed for the long trip on which they were about to start.

"I'm glad you are with us this evening, Mr. Atwell," said Mr. Dryden. "I am so weary of business that I rejoice when I can talk to a man who has—the other point of view. Let us go to dinner at once."

They walked into the dining-room and took seats at a table arranged for three. The dinner had been already ordered, and a waiter placed the first course with all the obsequious care which characterizes the well-trained servant who expects a liberal tip.

"Yes," continued Mr. Dryden, "I am very much attracted by the army life. There are no sordid considerations to worry about, and the problem of leading armies is one which requires the highest character, the highest intelligence, and the highest patriotism for its successful solution. If I had an opportunity to live my life over again, I would go to

West Point and make the service a life study."

The conversation drifted to the Philippines, and Douglas related his experiences, while Alice listened with that rapt attention which the subject always seemed to win from her. She scarcely spoke during the meal, but as they walked from the dining-room she said, "We hope you will call on us if you ever come to the East. Papa and I will always be glad to see you."

"Thank you," said Douglas, warmly, though nothing seemed to promise a trip to the East for many years to come. The regiment was scheduled for foreign service, and three years must pass before he would return to the United States.

A fussy porter carried the bags to an auto standing in front of the door, and in a few moments the party was rolling away from the magnificent hotel toward the railway station.

Alighting, Douglas and Alice walked out upon the platform and stood in the pale moonlight talking about the every-day trifles which make up the bulk of ordinary con-

versation, while Mr. Dryden went to the office to arrange the final details for their departure. Over on the track beyond stood the long night express, ready for its trans-continental trip from the land of sunshine and flowers to the heart of New York.

Not more than five minutes remained before the appointed train time, when the cheery voice of Rory O'Connor was heard, and that handsome young officer, accompanied by Gertrude, dashed up to where they stood.

"I didn't want to intrude," said Rory apologetically, "but I just couldn't let you go without saying good-bye personally, don't you know, and warning you that you must not forget to write to me—and to Douglas. We do like you so much, but we are a little afraid to say it, and you must pardon us if we don't make ourselves perfectly clear—at once."

Alice burst into peals of laughter. "I shall try to write, Rory, you old dear," she said, and Douglas was heartily thankful for the darkness to conceal his embarrassment at the prospect of an occasional letter. He was searching for something fitting the occasion

when Mr. Dryden emerged from the door and advanced toward them. Two large automobiles wheeled up to the station, and to his astonishment Douglas beheld Westmoreland and Parkinson in one machine under charge of a policeman, while Hawkins and Benedict leaped from the other and moved rapidly along the platform. Straight as an arrow Hawkins came, his giant form swaying from side to side, and his steel-like hand descended upon the shoulder of Mr. Dryden, behind whom Roland McGrew stood, his eyes shining with excitement.

"I arrest you in the name of the law," said Hawkins. "You will have to come with me."

Douglas sprang forward and seized Hawkins by the arm.

"Steady, Hawkins, you have made a mistake. This is Mr. Dryden, of New York."

"Exactly," said Hawkins firmly. "Mr. Dryden of New York is the very man I want, and I've got him. Here's the warrant."

Benedict had seized Douglas by the coat and was pulling him back.

"There's no mistake, Atwell," said he in



**"YOU WILL HAVE TO COME
WITH ME"**

a low tone. "He is the man who signed your \$25,000 check. He is the big stick in all this big swindle."

The earth and sea and sky seemed whirling, swirling about and the ground seemed warping and shifting beneath his feet as Douglas gazed blankly at the horrified faces of Alice and her father, and realized that he had labored for days to bring this upon them. These then were the people whom he had agreed to prosecute !

CHAPTER XIII

TOM JENKINS COMES OUT OF HIDING

For a moment Mr. Dryden and his daughter were too much surprised and startled to speak. Then the composure of the experienced business man asserted itself and he said, "I am ignorant of the situation. May I see your warrant, please?"

He glanced it over, his face turned very pale, and with trembling fingers he handed it back.

"Very well," he said. "Alice, we must postpone our trip. Please ask the agent to cancel our engagement for berths. I must ask you, Mr. Atwell, to escort my daughter back to the hotel. I will adjust this difficulty, and join you there later."

Then he turned to Hawkins and Benedict. "Now I am ready, gentlemen," and the three moved away rapidly to the automobile waiting for them at the end of the station, and Douglas and Alice in silence reëntered the

waiting-room, followed by Rory and Gertrude, all so overwhelmed by the occurrence that conversation was impossible.

Alice walked to the office of the Pullman sleepers, and said as naturally as if nothing had occurred :

"Please cancel Mr. Dryden's reservations for the staterooms on the eight o'clock train to-night." Then she turned sweetly to Rory. "I thank you so much for coming over, and you, Miss Atwell. It was very sweet of you." She held out her hand as a signal that they were courteously dismissed, and for once Roderick O'Connor was at a loss for something pleasant to say. He had worked strenuously for nearly a week to accomplish the apprehension of the man who had signed the big bribe check, and it was impossible now to congratulate himself or Alice on her father's arrest. He merely tried to treat the matter as lightly as possible, but his voice was full of kindness as he replied, "I will be over to see you soon. We are at your service."

"Thank you," said Alice, and her eyes expressed her gratitude as she turned away from them and said to Douglas, "Will you please

have the trunks held and returned to the hotel? I will wait for you here."

Douglas hurried to the baggage-room, highly pleased at the courage which Alice showed, and most of all at her complete understanding of the proper thing to do in the emergency. There were no tears, no hysteria, no rantings or pleadings. She met the ugly situation as a courageous man would meet it, and Douglas felt a respect for her which had never before entered into his estimate of her character.

It required but a few minutes to arrest the shipment of the trunks, and to direct that they be sent back to the hotel and then he returned to Alice.

"I told the porter to take our bags back," she said. "The auto is waiting outside." She rose and they moved out into the street, stepped into the big machine and rolled away in silence, which remained unbroken for several moments. Then Alice said, "I presume this seems incomprehensible to you, Mr. Atwell, but I happen to know a great deal about papa's business affairs, and I was not surprised at a smash-up. Things have been

going badly lately, and papa has been worried to the verge of prostration. I wanted to be alone with you to ask for your help."

Douglas felt the blood rush to his face, and pound and throb at his temples till he imagined the strokes must be audible to his companion. How could he tell her that he not only could not help, but that on the contrary he was committed in all probability to a prosecution of the people concerned; but there was still a chance, and he leaped at it.

"I—I don't fully understand," he said.

"Of course you do not," said Alice. "I will tell you more at the hotel."

They swept on through the streets, exchanging a few commonplace remarks, and stopped at the hotel they had left only a half hour before in the belief that their paths were about to part forever.

Alice led the way to the parlor and seated herself in one of the great comfortable chairs which contributed so much to the luxury of the establishment, while Douglas drew up a chair in front of her, fearing the consequences which might result from this conversation, yet hoping that his fears might not be well founded.

Alice at once plunged into her subject. "I cannot tell you any of the details," she went on, "but from what papa has told me I could guess at his anxiety. It was necessary for him to hurry to San Francisco to back up some enterprises which must be put through to retain his position in the concern to which he belongs. He has spent sleepless nights over the situation and several times I heard him talk about the attacks which have become popular upon the trusts and say that the lawyers might get after him. Of course I do not know the exact situation, but this seems to be merely the work of some cheap lawyer who wants to make a living by posing as the champion of the people and the enemy of the trusts."

She gazed at Douglas, but he merely nodded and waited for her to go on. There seemed no opportunity for him to offer a word of encouragement.

"This department in San Francisco has been under my cousin, Beverly Van Duyne, who, as you know, was a failure at West Point and who has been a source of anxiety to the family ever since. I think papa made a mis-

take in the men he has employed to assist him. Mr. Westmoreland ——”

Douglas started. “What has Mr. Westmoreland to do with the matter?”

“He is counsel for the San Francisco branch of the firm to which papa belongs.”

“What is the firm?”

“Jacobs, Sharp & Co. Papa is a silent partner. I heard about Mr. Westmoreland only a few days ago, and saw him for the first time when he met you in Golden Gate Park.”

Douglas sank back into his chair with an internal groan. In his distress at the personal shock and embarrassment to which Alice had been subjected, he had not grasped the full meaning of the situation. He had vaguely hoped that there might be some escape from the unpleasant truth which the arrest suggested, but with Alice’s statement all doubt vanished.

The truth was all too clear to him now. Westmoreland was the confidential agent of the firm. Never before had he associated this unscrupulous lawyer with the Drydens, but now the memory of the past came back as if

a curtain had been rent asunder, revealing a scene once familiar but temporarily forgotten. Westmoreland was with Van Duyne the day he was carried off the gridiron at Franklin Field. He now remembered their faces with the most perfect clearness as they gazed upon him with that sort of curiosity which the spectators at Rome felt in the wounded gladiator.

And behind the schemes of Beverly Van Duyne, into which Mr. Dryden had been drawn, were Mr. Westmoreland and Blair Parkinson, with his professional thugs, Indian Kleboe and Tom Jenkins.

Alice Dryden sought his help to protect this group of scoundrels because her father stood between them and the law. It was impossible. He sat silent, his gaze fixed upon the floor.

"What is the matter?" she said at length.

There was no escape. He might as well be candid. "I cannot help," said Douglas. "I have promised to assist in the criminal prosecution of the men Mr. Benedict was to arrest to-night."

"To prosecute my father?" said Alice in horror.

"Yes," said Douglas, "if he is the man involved, and it seems certain that he is. Believe me, I am sorry ——"

"Oh!" She had risen, the single syllable resounding through the room like a suppressed cry of anger as she pressed her hand to her face.

They stood gazing at each other for a moment. Then her hand dropped to her side. "That is all," she said simply.

It was the same signal of dismissal, stripped of its kindliness, which she had used when disposing of Rory at the railroad station, and Douglas had no desire to subject himself to humiliation by attempting an expression of sympathy.

"Good-night," he said quietly, and left the hotel.

When Douglas reached his quarters, he found Rory in his room, badly worried, thoroughly stampeded, in fact. He held up his hands as Douglas entered, and exclaimed: "Well, we certainly have made a mess of it. I haven't done such hard work for a year, and all to bring about the arrest and disgrace of a lifelong friend. I cannot believe that Mr.

Dryden is aware of the whole situation. I have always considered him perfectly honest and upright, and believe he has been deceived by the others involved in the swindle."

"The man behind the whole thing is Beverly Van Duyne, whose career at the Academy was terminated when Brown was forced to resign."

"Beverly Van Duyne!" exclaimed Rory.

"Exactly," said Douglas, and he proceeded to narrate the story Alice had told him as they sat together at the hotel. "She asked for my help," he went on, "and I was forced to tell her that I am committed to assisting in a criminal prosecution of her father."

Rory sank in his chair. "Is there no way out of it?" he asked.

"None, so far as I can see," said Douglas. "If I am called I will testify as I agreed. Benedict warned me that the business was full of unpleasant situations, and I still agreed to go on. Had any one but Mr. Dryden been arrested to-night we would have rejoiced in the success of our operations. Can I stop now because the chief man in the case is—one whom we do not like to embarrass?"

Rory was silent. He rose and walked up and down, and then stopped in the middle of the room. "It is pretty tough," said he, "to have something all sewed up and fixed for good and then to have an old pal come along and cut the stitches—and all in ignorance of what he is doing. But there are several ways of showing your regard for a person besides sending her parents to state's prison for bribery, larceny and other crimes which afford amusement to high financiers. Buck up, Dug; the situation is not so bad as it could be."

But Douglas had no taste for frivolity, and Rory left him, his face resting in his hands, and went to bed.

Breakfast next morning was attended by a quiet and subdued group in the Atwell household, and Douglas left for his office with the feeling of one who dwells upon the palpitating slopes at the base of a volcano, ever waiting for the pent-up fury to burst forth. He half expected to find some one waiting for him in the street, but no one appeared. The morning papers were filled with the sensational story of the arrest the night before, but as usual the account was garbled, so that no one would

recognize the facts in the case, and Douglas was duly grateful that his name had not been drawn into it. He ardently hoped that the whole matter had passed into the hands of Benedict to be fought out like any other legal controversy, but as he reached the corner he saw Roland McGrew gazing cautiously from the door of the Phelan Building, and apparently awaiting his arrival.

Terror was depicted in the boy's face.

"What is the trouble, Roland?" he said.

Roland shrank back into the vestibule.

"They are after me," he said.

"Who?"

"Indian Kleboe and his gang."

"But they were arrested last night."

"Yes," said Roland, "but they got out on bail. They are all out, and one of the boys rushed in and told me they were looking for me, and I got out through an alley and hid all night." Roland shivered. "Giuseppi told them what I had done."

"What did you do?"

"Took Mr. Westmoreland's papers out of the case on his desk and put in newspapers instead. I skipped out and Giuseppi saw me."

When Mr. Westmoreland got out last night he went to the bank and I followed him. They all went in and I suppose they found out what had happened. Anyway Giuseppe told them and they are hunting for me. Giuseppe is the little Italian who was bounced, and I got his job. He was sore."

"What did you do with the papers?"

"I gave them to Mr. Benedict," said Roland.

Douglas stood in silence. It was useless to talk to Roland about the wisdom or the morality of his conduct. He himself had urged the boy to secure what information he could about Westmoreland, and here was information of the most valuable kind. Indeed in the strife of good and evil it is difficult to know what is justified and what is not. It was no time now for moralizing. The good leader never rails over that which is done. He accepts the situation and resolutely goes on. The thing he feared had actually occurred, and the situation must be handled as it stood.

"Are you afraid to go home, Roland?"

"Yes."

"All right," he said. "I will take care of you. Come up-stairs."

Together they went to his office, and Douglas wrote a note to Corporal Klondyke Jones requesting him to look out for the boy, to see that he was fed and housed at his expense, and enclosed some money for Roland's mother.

"Well, Roland," said Douglas, "the army adopts you. Go over to the fort and look up Corporal Jones. He will see that your mother gets food and money at once."

Roland's eyes lit up with confidence and delight. He stood erect, his heels came together, and the appearance of fear and apprehension left him as if by magic.

"Thank you, sir," he said, and hurried from the room.

"So they are all out again," mused Douglas, "and the war is on once more. Well, let the war rage. The harder the fight the sooner it will be over."

He went into his room and took up his work. Down at the banking house in Market Street Westmoreland was walking the floor in a frenzy of fury and disappointment, while on his desk lay the newspapers which Roland McGrew had substituted for the documents on which he had framed the whole structure

of his scheme for the illegal operations of the concern he represented.

Beverly Van Duyne swung carelessly back and forth in his swivel chair, and urged his lawyer to "buck up" and show his old-time form in securing a remedy.

"The remedy will depend on what has been done with the papers. The boy who took them knows where they are. We will settle this matter first."

And while Westmoreland and Beverly Van Duyne discussed this important feature of the case, Alice Dryden sat alone in the room of her hotel, her tear-stained eyes gazing vacantly into space. She had been confronted for the first time with one of the real difficulties of life.

Thus the morning passed and so too the afternoon, a strenuous day in which Benedict had pressed his case with the fire and vigor which always characterized his conduct in action. And when the sun went down upon the great city of San Francisco the young lawyer felt that he had so marshaled his forces as to insure his ultimate success. The data gathered by the most painstaking care

for three years had been completed by the papers secured for him by Roland McGrew, and there remained only the necessity for a powerful presentation of the case, of which he was eminently capable.

In the home of the Atwells every effort was made to throw off the influence of the ugly scene in which they had participated. After dinner Gertrude played and sang with all the spirit she could muster, but the minds of her hearers were elsewhere, and she abandoned the effort.

"There is nothing to do but sleep it off," said Rory, and he and Douglas rose to go to their rooms when the bell rang.

Douglas stepped out into the hall and opened the door. Upon the porch stood a man shabbily dressed in civilian's clothing with a slouch hat pulled down over his eyes.

"Good-evening, lieutenant," he said, and with a start Douglas recognized the voice of Tom Jenkins, ex-private of his company, ex-convict from Alcatraz, the man who had invaded his room and knocked him out with one blow in the struggle for possession of the check which Jenkins had come to secure.

"I guess the lieutenant knows me," he said cautiously.

"Yes, Jenkins, I know you. What brings you here?" Douglas had stepped out on the porch, and Rory had followed him.

"Well, sir," said Jenkins, shifting uneasily, "I am pretty low down, I guess, but I can't go the limit, and I decided to get back with honest men if there's a chance. I've been a dog for Blair Parkinson long enough. Maybe I would never have come back, but, sir, I thought the lieutenant would remember that I never showed the white feather, and only quit when everything was peaceful and there wasn't no danger."

"Yes," said Douglas, wondering what the man was leading up to, "you fought bravely in the Philippines, but you deserted twice, and now you are associating with Blair Parkinson, Indian Kleboe and his gang of cut-throats, and you can't expect much consideration from me."

Jenkins recoiled. He did not know that his movements were known so well. He shifted about and gazed down at his rugged wrists, so lately encased in handcuffs. The

handcuff and the jail seemed all that the future could hold out for him, if he continued on his present course, and he was honestly trying to escape from the downward sweep of the current which had borne him on to destruction since he made the first great mistake and deserted his flag.

"Sir, lieutenant," said he, "I know I don't deserve no consideration, and I ain't askin' none, but Blair Parkinson ordered me to do a job and I told him I would, but I can't, so I come to you."

"What is the job?" asked Douglas anxiously.

"Parkinson says a newsboy named McGrew has peached on the gang, and we are to capture him to-night and take him to the dock at ——— Street. After we get out of him what Parkinson wants to know, why, sir, he is to be knocked on the head and dropped in the bay. A little Italian kid is watchin' for him to come to his home, and Indian Kleboe is to nab him. I join them at the dock to guard against coppers. I agreed to do it, sir, but I can't. I ain't no murderer, sir. I couldn't harm the kid. I am goin' against the gang,

and it's death to some one before we're through." Jenkins' voice trembled, and his stubby fist clinched.

"When is this to happen?" asked Douglas.

"At midnight to-night, sir."

Douglas rushed for the 'phone and called up Corporal Klondyke Jones. "Is Roland McGrew at the company?"

"No," replied Klondyke; "he left a little while ago to take the money you gave him to his mother. He said he would come back to-night if he could get back. If not, to-morrow morning."

Douglas hung up the receiver and pulled out his watch. It was nine o'clock.

Rory was squeezing his arms. "Look out for a trick," said he.

Douglas hesitated for a moment. Then he faced the square-shouldered convict, and said, "Jenkins, I am going to that dock armed with a gun. If you are trying to lead me into a trap, you may succeed, but either you or I will be dead to-morrow. Do you go with me?"

"I do, lieutenant," said Jenkins, and his eyes blazed with the fire one sees when men prepare for a charge on a hostile trench.

CHAPTER XIV

ON THE DOCKS AT MIDNIGHT

JENKINS stood waiting on the porch while Douglas and Rory hurriedly prepared for the work of the night.

Dressed in the same suits they had worn in their visit to the slums, and armed with loaded pistols they came down and hurried to the boat landing with Jenkins following.

"There is no danger that this thing may be done before the appointed hour?" asked Douglas after the group had retired to an obscure corner of the boat.

"I don't think so," whispered Jenkins. "My orders was to be at the dock at half-past eleven, and that the thing was to come off at twelve. The kid will be brought down in a hack. Parkinson would never change his plans for fear things might go wrong."

"We shall have to risk it," said Douglas. "You go ashore first, Jenkins, when we land, and we will follow you. Wait at the first

corner for us until we come up. I must send some messages."

"All right, sir," replied Jenkins, and all lapsed into silence.

The boat was swinging out across the bay with only the few on board who found it necessary at this late hour to go to San Francisco. The sky was heavily overcast, and the shore loomed black and foreboding along the horizon, relieved only by the lights which gleamed along the water-front within a block of which the "gangs" of the district plied their trade in comparative security. A cold raw wind swept across the bay, dashing the spray high against the side of the little vessel and sending the chills through the three silent men as they sat gazing at the scene where a human life was to be ruthlessly sacrificed in order that the capital backed by Beverly Van Duyne might be saved from the legal attack which Benedict was directing against it. Beverly Van Duyne knew nothing about the tragedy which had been planned. The story of Roland McGrew's strange disappearance would produce no effect upon the men most concerned nor upon Mr. Dryden, upon whom the ultimate responsibil-

ity must lie. Beverly Van Duyne merely directed his attorney to recover the lost papers, and Mr. Westmoreland, correctly suspecting Roland McGrew, called the man suited for the work at hand and in non-committal terms directed that he "look up the boy and find the papers."

These gentlemen merely dictated the policy of the concern. The details of execution were left to their subordinates, and over in the great city beyond that line of lights along the water-front a group of subordinates were preparing to execute the policy of the concern at the apex of which Mr. Dryden stood spotless in his own esteem.

This was the combination for the protection of which Alice Dryden sought Douglas' help—"but she does not understand," he mused. "She does not know what she asks, and I cannot help."

The boat floated up to the dock, and Jenkins stepped ashore and moved rapidly off to the appointed place.

"Follow him at a short distance," said Douglas, "while I try to get Benedict on the 'phone. I will join you in a few moments."

Douglas found a 'phone and called Benedict's residence, but he was not there. Another at which he could frequently be found was tried, but he had not been seen that day. A third and fourth effort yielded equally unsatisfactory results, and Douglas hung up the receiver in despair. He had no information as to where Hawkins could be found, and he knew of no one in whom he dare confide. Slowly he walked up the street and joined Rory.

"I can't find Benedict," he said, "and don't know where Hawkins can be reached. His name is not in the directory. Benedict calls him Hawkins, but that is not his true name. Can you suggest anything?"

"Perhaps Jenkins will know," said Rory.

They reached the corner and conversed in the darkness in a low tone, but Jenkins knew nothing of Hawkins' whereabouts.

"I expected to have Benedict and Hawkins with us," said Douglas, "but we can have neither of them. How many men do you think will be on the dock?"

"Parkinson is to be there, and Indian Kleboe and another crook who drives the

hack, but I don't know of any one else. There may be more."

"That makes three to a certainty. Are you willing to go in with us and risk the outcome?" asked Douglas.

"If the lieutenant goes in I am with him," said Jenkins. "I never showed the white feather yet."

"All right," said Douglas. "We will go in as we stand. It is too late to look for help, and we can't trust telling our story to a policeman on the beat who might bungle the thing or warn Parkinson. We must get him red-handed to-night so that there will be no bail this time."

"What is your plan?" asked Jenkins eagerly.

"We will go to the dock right away and if it is safe we will look it over, then hide near where you are to stand so that we can hear what you say. After they have gone out on the dock we will close in on them and fight it out. We must save the boy and get as many of them as we can. Do you think we can do it?"

"There's a fighting chance," said Jenkins,

his eyes glittering as Douglas had seen them glitter behind his black mask when Jenkins stood outside his window and watched him manipulate the check he had been sent to get.

"Well, we will take the chance," said Douglas. "Now tell us how you agreed to handle your part of the plan."

"I was to go over the dock and see that it was clear," said Jenkins, "and then come back and stand there and wait for the hack to come up. After that I was to stand guard and whistle every minute or so to let them know that all was well."

"All right," said Douglas. "We will let them get out on the dock, and after you have whistled a few times we will crawl up on them and rush together. Is that agreed?"

"I'm ready," said Rory, adjusting his revolver.

"Me too," said Jenkins.

"There's no chance that the boy may be killed before bringing him to the dock?"

"No," said Jenkins. "Parkinson would never do that. The bay is the only place what tells no tales."

Douglas shivered. The spectacle of the

huge criminal with his turtle-like head stood out before his mind's eye as clearly as if they confronted each other in broad daylight. The time had come when they must meet.

"It is ten-thirty," said Douglas. "Let us move. You may go ahead, Jenkins. We will follow about a half a block behind you."

"All right, sir," said Jenkins, and he stepped out briskly, his square shoulders swinging from side to side with that rolling motion which he had acquired in the days aboard the vessels on which he had spent the greater part of his life. Every motion was suggestive of power, and the two young officers followed him with a feeling of increasing confidence. It was well to have him as a friend, dangerous to have him as an enemy.

The few people whom they met in the street hurried along unmindful of all except their own affairs and Jenkins arrived at the designated pier apparently unnoticed by any passer-by.

Douglas and Rory walked to the corner opposite the pier and stepped into the hall of a foul smelling building from which they could plainly see and yet escape observation.

Jenkins waited till he noted the hall into which they had disappeared, then he sauntered slowly out upon the pier, and the sound of his footsteps died away in the darkness in which he was lost to view.

A few moments later he reappeared, and his square form stood out dimly against the darkness beyond.

A half hour passed and a policeman sauntered by and slowly continued his march along his beat. The wait had lengthened to nearly an hour when the sound of footsteps was heard, and peering through the half-lighted street Douglas could see a man approaching. It was a quarter to twelve. As the pedestrian approached his step became more cautious and finally grew almost soundless as the huge figure of Blair Parkinson shambled in front of the door. In plain view he stood upon the corner watching the outline of his accomplice at the entrance to the pier.

Then he crossed the street with the ambling, ape-like motion which seemed to separate him from relationship with the human family, and to class him with the brute.

A few unintelligible words passed, and then

Blair Parkinson half ran, half walked down the adjacent street. A moment later the sound of an approaching vehicle came to the tense ears of the two officers, and they waited with bated breath and hands instinctively seeking the butts of the big six-shooters strapped to their hips. On came the wagon until the dock was reached ; then it turned to the right and cautiously drew up to the sidewalk.

Three men sprang out and from a dark object which they carried in their arms came the stifled gurgle of a young voice. There could be no doubt the program as outlined by Jenkins was about to be carried out.

The three men moved rapidly out upon the pier, and it was clear that one of them was Blair Parkinson.

Douglas crept closer to the door, but Rory grasped him by the arm and pressed his lips close to his ear. "The driver," he whispered.

Douglas turned his eyes toward the man on the seat with a sudden awakening to the defect in his plan. He had not thought of the part the driver would play in the game, but now between him and the boy who was to be

murdered was this member of the gang ready to sound the alarm at the first movement for the pier.

The three men had disappeared, but from the darkness far out on the pier came a muffled scream, and Douglas started forward. What was to be done? They might all suddenly attack the driver, but the noise created by the combat would be sure to warn the men on the pier and permit their escape, possibly causing them to hasten the slaughter of the boy by plunging him into the bay.

"We can wait a moment longer," whispered Rory, and as he spoke the driver stepped down from his seat, tied his horse and strolled out upon the pier. His curiosity to know what was occurring had solved the problem for them.

"That makes four," said Douglas, "but we've got to take the chances. Come on."

Jenkins' whistle, indicating that all was well, sounded through the darkness as Douglas and Rory emerged from the door, revolver in hand, and hurried across the street.

"Right down the pier all abreast and on tiptoe," said Douglas. "If they discover us

we will charge. Jenkins, you knock your man overboard. That will leave three, and we must try to get them if we can. Take the left, Jenkins, Rory the center, I will take the right." Along the pier they moved, the light sound of their footsteps drowned by the lapping of the water along the wharves.

When half-way down the pier the moon suddenly emerged through a rift in the clouds, and all dropped in their tracks, obedient to the instinct of the soldier fired upon in the line of march.

At the end of the pier the group stood dimly revealed. Two men were kneeling over a small bundle which lay upon the floor, one was standing a few paces away, and the fourth was seated upon the rail upon the edge of the dock.

The clouds closed over the face of the moon almost as suddenly as they had parted, and deep blackness settled again over the waters.

All rose and moved rapidly forward. In a moment they were within ten paces of the group, when a low voice said, "Pull the gag again. This is your last chance, kid. If you don't tell now, the sharks will have your



*ALL DROPPED IN THEIR
TRACKS*

carcass inside of ten minutes." Then came the sound of untying bands, accompanied by a noise which suggested the threshing of head and arms upon the floor.

"Do you tell?"

"No-o-o! No-o-o!" came the reply, followed by a scream choked so quickly that it died away in a gurgle while the form upon the floor rolled and tumbled as the boy fought to escape the grip upon his throat.

It was the moment for action. Forward sprang the trio without a word as soldiers rise to the charge without orders when a slight confusion in the hostile ranks announces that the moment for decisive action has arrived.

Light and quick as a cat Jenkins fell upon the man at the rail and with one terrific upward stroke of his fist raised him free of his seat and sent him headlong into the water. The sounds of a furious struggle followed, and as Douglas leaped over the prostrate body of Roland McGrew, he saw the huge form of Blair Parkinson crouching to receive his charge. It was no time to think of consequences. With all his strength Douglas swung with his revolver at the turtle-like head

before him. Up shot Parkinson's hand, and Douglas felt his blow arrested by the steel-like grip upon his wrist, and the next instant Parkinson's free hand had closed upon the revolver and was bending it backward toward his breast. With his left hand Douglas seized the barrel and struggled with all his strength to turn it against the brute before him. Back and forth they struggled oblivious of all else. Suddenly a crash sounded by his side and Douglas heard Rory yell, "Stick to him, Dug. I've got my man."

Parkinson suddenly released his grip and sprang backward.

"Hands up," yelled Douglas, but the huge form lurched sideways. There was a splash, and Douglas stood upon the edge of the dock staring into the dark waters which had enveloped the form of the greatest crook in San Francisco.

"Look out," shouted Douglas. "He'll be up in a few seconds," and with ears strained to catch the sound of his arrival at the surface he waited and listened, but there was no sound but the lapping of the water beneath the dock. Parkinson did not reappear.

Without turning Douglas could gather the details of the situation. The fight was over. Indian Kleboe was lying upon his face with Rory's revolver close to the back of his head. Jack McGoority, the hack driver, lay unconscious on the dock where Jenkins had laid him out, while the latter untied the ropes which bound Roland McGrew in a gunny-sack half filled with rocks.

The dark waters gave no indications of what had become of the man whom Jenkins had sent reeling from the pier, nor of the whereabouts of Blair Parkinson. The moon emerged again from the clouds, but its light revealed the surface broken only by the wavelets, pitched up by the raw wind which swept across the bay. Beneath the docks the darkness was impenetrable.

"He has drowned or escaped," said Douglas. "No human being could remain beneath the surface for that length of time and live."

Released from the ropes which bound him, Roland lay upon the dock sobbing hysterically. The fearful ordeal through which he had passed had taken away all his strength, and his impotent fury mingled with gratitude for

his delivery expressed itself childlike in a flood of tears.

Springing about like a cat, Jenkins rapidly bound his two prisoners' arms behind them with the rope which had bound Roland, and then he said, "We must get out quick. Parkinson is not drowned. He is under the dock somewhere, but you'll never find him."

Indian Kleboe and Jack McGoority were yanked to their feet, the latter able to understand at last that something had hit him, and that he was a prisoner.

"Hike out," said Jenkins savagely, as he held together the ends of the ropes which bound the prisoners, and they took up the march toward the street, Roland, Douglas and Rory following and carrying with them the ropes, rocks, and other evidences of the crime which Parkinson and his associates had planned to execute.

The street was clear, and the group halted unobserved beside McGoority's cab.

"Get in," said Jenkins, and the prisoners entered. "I'll drive, lieutenant; where do you want to go?"

Douglas gave the address of Benedict's

residence, and as Jenkins sprang to the seat Douglas and Rory, revolvers in hand, stepped into the hack with Roland between them. Indian Kleboe and Jack McGoority with arms bound behind them sat facing the revolvers, but Blair Parkinson was still unaccounted for.

Out through the deserted street the hack rolled, and after a half hour's drive, drew up in front of Benedict's house.

"I will go in and see him," said Douglas, as he stepped out of the hack. It required several minutes to arouse Benedict from his slumbers, but at last he came down, and the story of the night was recounted by Douglas and Roland McGrew, while Rory remained on guard.

"How did they get you, my boy?" asked Benedict, when he heard of Roland's plucky refusal to tell what he had done with the papers.

"I was taking some money to my mother," said Roland, "and lay out in the back yard until after nine o'clock." His voice was quavering, and his throat ached so that he could scarcely speak, but he went on, "There

didn't seem to be no one around, but just as I was sneaking up the stairs, out steps Giuseppi, the Italian kid, and before I could get to my mother's room, Indian Kleboe was on top of me. He jammed a gag into my mouth and hauled me down to the street. Him and Jack McGoority put me into the hack and drove off. They said they would throw me into the bay if I didn't tell what I had done with the papers. But I didn't tell, and Blair Parkinson didn't find out."

"You did fine work, Roland," said Benedict. "You are a little brick, and we will take care of you. To-night you made good, and we will see that you have a bright future."

Roland's heart swelled with happiness, the tears stood in his eyes, and he choked out of his aching throat a brief "Thank you, sir," but he knew that the turning point of his life had come, and with the quickness of a boy's imagination he looked into the future and saw the possibilities which this night might bring to him.

Douglas and Roland stepped back into the hack and Benedict joined them at the police

station, now in charge of a man who knew Benedict and recognized the culprits.

All formality was dispensed with, and Douglas saw the iron doors close with a click upon Indian Kleboe and Jack McGoority.

"Jenkins can never go back to the district in which he has been living," said Douglas, as the group emerged from the police station. "He would be dead inside of a week, and yet we can't take him back into the service."

"Yes," said Benedict. "I will find him a job. Come to me to-morrow, Jenkins. Don't lose your nerve, and you will come out all right. We've got the enemy running, and we're sure to win."

Benedict left for his home and Douglas, Rory and Roland stepped back into the hack. They drove back to ——— Street, where Roland McGrew lived, and Douglas and Rory stood guard over him while the boy went to his rooms and turned over the much needed money to his mother, which he had risked his life to deliver a few hours before.

Roland assured his mother that he would be safe under his new protectors, and with hope beating high in his heart he dashed back

down the stairs, and out of the door of the miserable rookery which he was destined never to enter again.

The hack was turned over to its proper owners, and with Roland walking between them Douglas and Rory turned toward the ferry, while Jenkins, head erect and shoulders back, once more walked away from the scenes of his recent degradation, a redeemed man instead of a murderer.

Douglas reached his home before the family was awake. He had had no sleep, but nevertheless, when the hour designated for office duty arrived, he was at his desk and ready for work.

The clerk came in with the morning mail, and a generous share of a big pile was laid on his table.

He glanced it over carelessly. "Abraham," he said, as he tore open one of the envelopes inscribed in the familiar hand he had known for four years at the Academy. "Several of us will be in San Francisco to-day," ran the letter. "As Karl Krumms, the flying Dutchman, you and O'Connor are all in town it is proposed that we have a little reunion at

the —— Hotel. Dinner will be served at 7 P. M. and, without making any special arrangements, we will get together as many as can come. We are all eager to see you, and hope you will be there."

"It is the hotel at which the Drydens are stopping," mused Douglas. "There is a chance that we may meet them, and that is highly undesirable, but ——" He sat gazing into space for several minutes. "Nevertheless I will go."

He reached for a telephone and notified the hotel that he would be a member of the party.

CHAPTER XV

A PAINFUL INTERVIEW

DOUGLAS and Rory, clad in evening dress, stood upon the deck of the little steamer as she pulled out from the landing and turned her nose toward the city of San Francisco. The sun was setting on the evening of April 18th, and its mellow rays lay upon the ocean like a golden liquid spread by fairy hands. On either side of the bay rose the hills whose huge black batteries guarded the entrance to the gateway of the city, their rugged slopes touched with the parting rays of the sun. Upon these beautiful slopes the returning soldier from the Philippines first rests his gaze, and with a heart full of pride in his native land drinks in its beauty till the onward sweep of the transport carries him through the portals of the Golden Gate. Douglas remembered his return when, after the terrible campaign through the jungles of Luzon, he came back to the land of his

birth, honored by his superiors, the happy beneficiary of a presidential appointment to the United States Military Academy.

Now as then a railroad train was visible as it swept along the side of the promontory, and the harbor resounded with the hoarse shriek of steamers, while here and there a sail stood out majestically as it bore away toward the mouth of the harbor to carry its coastwise trade far up to the mouth of the Columbia or south to the Isthmus of Panama.

Beyond lay the city with its towering buildings rising here and there like giants among their older associates, their windows shining in the light of the setting sun like watch-fires of a distant encampment. For miles the solid buildings stretched about the bay, rising story upon story, each year reaching higher and higher in the effort to concentrate into smaller space the energies which were making of this western metropolis the very heart and center of the trade of the Pacific.

Power and magnificence were expressed in every line of man's handiwork. Nature, submissive to his will, was doing his bidding

with the clock-like regularity of a system which seemed established beyond the possibility of derangement.

Absorbed in the beauty of the buildings, Douglas and Rory saw the sun slowly sink beneath the horizon and darkness gently fold the city to her bosom.

They landed at the pier and walked up Market Street to the hotel at which the Class of 190- was to hold its first small reunion.

Zeke Shanks had already arrived, and fell upon Douglas and Rory with a gusto which indicated that he had lost none of his old-time zeal.

"I sure am glad to see you," he roared. "Not married yet?"

"No," said Douglas. "I guess I was cut out for a bachelor, Zeke."

"Ho, ho, ho," roared Zeke. "What has become of that pretty little Jenny Dresden, or Dryden, or something like, whom you used to be so sweet on at West Point?"

"None of that, Zeke," said Douglas savagely. "She is in this hotel."

Zeke clapped his hand over his mouth, and in a stage whisper which could be heard half

way along the corridor he said to Rory—"Awful touchy for one who isn't interested in marriage."

In a few minutes all were assembled about their private table, delighted beyond measure at this opportunity of being together again and of hearing the stories which each had to tell of his experience as a "shave-tail"¹ in the regular service. And interesting stories they were, recounting scenes which carried the listeners from Alaska to the Philippines, from Panama to the tropics of South America, where one of their number had gone on important business for the American government.

The meal had nearly drawn to a close when Karl Krumms rapped for order. "Gentlemen," said he, "I have secured seats at the theater for the entire party to-night. Carriages await us at the door."

Karl's lavish generosity was cheered to the echo and the "Flying Dutchman" was honored as became a capitalist of his rank.

Dinner was finished promptly, and in high

¹Shave-tail—Name applied to new mules and to young second lieutenants in the regular service.

spirits the party emerged from the hotel and piled into the carriages drawn up in front of the door.

Douglas was standing upon the sidewalk when the door opened and Alice Dryden and her father, accompanied by ex-Senator Sharp, emerged from the hotel, and walked out to the big automobile in which he had accompanied her to the railroad station but two nights before.

Their eyes met, and Alice paused as though startled, betraying for the first time in her life an emotion beyond her control.

"Good-evening, Miss Dryden," said Douglas, and Alice returned the salutation, but in her face was the haunted look of one who has felt the weight of dread and anxiety.

Douglas stepped into the carriage and the party rolled away to the theater.

The play was interesting, the acting excellent, but Douglas had lost the power to enjoy. He looked into the future and saw himself contributing to the prosecution of Alice Dryden's father, assisting in dragging him down to ruin and disgrace in spite of her appeal to him for help. Yet how could he de-

sist? Perhaps Benedict would not call on him, but if he did, and Benedict had said he would, there could be no escape.

It was after eleven o'clock when the party left the theater. Karl Krumms' resources had been exhausted in that one grand outburst of prodigality, and he announced to his guests that the walk home in the moonlight was also presented with his compliments.

It was indeed a beautiful night, and the walk was thoroughly enjoyed. The young officers had made various arrangements for the night, and the party gradually broke up until upon arrival at the hotel only Douglas and Rory were left. It was too late to return to the post, and as Douglas had informed his people that he would not return if delayed beyond 11 P. M., he and Rory entered the hotel to take rooms for the night.

Douglas was inscribing his name upon the register, when some one came to his side and he glanced up into the face of Mr. Dryden.

"How do you do, Mr. Atwell?" said the latter, extending his hand cordially.

Douglas accepted the proffered courtesy with hesitation. It was something of a shock

to see the object of his thoughts so suddenly appear before him.

"I would like to speak with you in private, Mr. Atwell," he said, as soon as Douglas had finished. "I trust I do not interfere with your plans," he added, glancing at Roderick.

"Not at all," said Rory, affably. "I am going straight to my room." He left at once, and Douglas followed Mr. Dryden to the parlor in which he and Alice had sat two evenings before after the interruption of the projected trip to the East.

Mr. Dryden seated himself in one of the great armchairs, and the lines in his face deepened as he leaned forward and began his story.

"I am told you have become somewhat familiar with the case in which I am concerned. You saw the—occurrence at the railroad station the other evening, and know of course that such unusual affairs cannot take place unless the matter is serious. So it is in this case, I am sorry to say."

He stroked the ends of his gray mustache and gazed intently at the floor. "I am going to be perfectly candid with you. Some years ago I became interested in the railroads and

the possibilities of San Francisco, and decided to make a fight for control. I threw all my capital into the enterprise, and the situation seemed to offer prospects of success. When Beverly Van Duyne left the Military Academy I was compelled to find a place for him in the Pacific division, and his work in connection with my plan was so successful that I trusted him more and more; but I was ignorant of his methods. He employed Westmoreland, bribed congressmen, bought local politicians, and finally built up a situation which was full of danger to all concerned. I had been committed and could not turn back." And Mr. Dryden proceeded with a story of financing, which for magnitude and danger would have read like a fairy-tale.

"Millions have become involved," he went on. "Mr. Van Duyne allowed the venture to become allied with stocks of no stability, and to-day the situation has degenerated into a gigantic gamble in which defeat means the collapse of the entire structure and my ruin as a business man. To win success Mr. Westmoreland conceived the plan with which you are familiar, and being unfamiliar with the :

army, he believed that he must buy his men. Only to-night I learned that the check I signed for \$25,000 was intended to buy your support of the Westmoreland scheme. My signature had not been used before in handling the case—it was a great mistake to use it then.”

Again Mr. Dryden entered into an extended narration of the operations by which his unscrupulous nephew had brought him to the point where retreat meant disaster and made no effort to conceal the fact that he stood a party to every transaction that had occurred. “And now,” he continued, “I come to the crucial point of my narrative. The principal tangible thing which connects me as an active agent with the illegal portion of this enterprise is my signature on the check which was sent to you. I do not ask you to accept the check and assist me in this extremity in which I find myself, but I do ask that you return the check or destroy it. Will you do it?”

“I must ask some questions,” said Douglas.

“Certainly,” said Mr. Dryden.

“You say that failure in this enterprise means ruin? Do you not know that the bid

may be rejected in Washington even though favorably reported upon here?"

"Yes, but we solve our problems as they arise. Acceptance here will inflate the collateral stock involved, and we will try to handle the situation after that."

"And if you are successful, what will this mean to the people of San Francisco, to the owners of honest capital and to the laborer who will pay millions for what is not worth thousands?"

Mr. Dryden gripped the arms of the chair. "In business," he said savagely, "men must fight their own battles."

"And you are a business man, Mr. Dryden," said Douglas. "I am sorry, but you will have to fight. I cannot give up the check, nor will I destroy it. If I am called to testify, I will honestly answer the questions asked me. No man ought to need the protection of anything but the truth, ought he?"

Mr. Dryden rose heavily. "All right," he said, "I'll fight," and with head bowed upon his chest the great financier walked slowly from the room.

His spirit was still strong, but his bent frame

proclaimed the crumbling of his physical strength and the ultimate collapse of his powers of resistance.

Douglas yearned to help him, yet duty compelled an opposite course. He stood irresolute for a moment, then turned and walked toward the door determined to go to his room and let events take their course. At the end of the parlor the curtains parted and Alice Dryden entered.

"Oh, how you startled me!" she said, recoiling as their eyes met.

"I—I am sorry," said Douglas, "but I was merely going to my room. I did not know you were down-stairs."

"You are remaining all night?"

"Yes, it is too late to return to the post," said Douglas, "so I decided to remain."

Her eyes brightened. "I was anxious about papa," she said. "Did you see him?"

"Yes," said Douglas. "He was in the parlor a few minutes ago."

Alice hesitated. "He was speaking to you, was he not?"

"Yes," said Douglas.

Alice caught her breath and leaned back

against the wall, her hands hanging limp by her side, her face expressing the pain and anxiety which were gnawing at her heart. "I must get to the air," she said. "I will wait until father comes back."

"May I help you?" said Douglas gently, as he took the wrap which she had over her arm.

She did not reply, but yielded submissively as a child, though twenty-four hours before she had dismissed him as imperiously as an offended queen.

Together they entered the adjacent parlor and Alice seated herself in a chair in front of an open window. Beside her rose a beautiful piece of statuary, glistening in the mellow light which poured down upon her hair and shoulders, and enhanced the pallor which had settled over her face. Douglas drew up a big armchair and took his seat. He was eager to do all that courtesy would permit, but in view of what had occurred it was difficult to avoid dangerous ground. Alice was deeply distressed, and for the first time in her life was struggling with one of the problems which come sooner or later into the life of every person.

"I thought papa had spoken to you," she said at length, "and I was eager to know—what was the outcome."

"Yes," said Douglas, "he spoke to me of the present situation. I cannot tell you how much I sympathize with your father and how I wish I could help him."

"But you can help him, Mr. Atwell. Did he not tell you?" And Douglas saw at once that he had made a mistake.

"Yes," he replied.

"He told you that if you gave up the check no prosecution could be successful?"

"He did not tell me that, but asked that I give up the check."

"And you promised?" her voice thrilled with eagerness and hope.

"I asked Mr. Dryden what would be the effect on honest business men and the poor laborers of San Francisco if this enterprise were successful. I am sorry to say he could not give me a satisfactory answer."

"Did you refuse?"

"I was forced to," said Douglas with an effort.

"Oh, how could you? How could you?"

she groaned. Her hands rose to her face and the tears trickled through her fingers, and splashed upon the shimmering silk of her gown. Douglas sat in silence. She controlled herself with an effort, and though her voice quavered, she went on: "Do you not realize what it is to bring such a man as my father to disgrace—and will you not protect me from the shame of it? We have been—friends."

Douglas felt his throat tighten as he replied: "I appreciate the horror of it all, and if you were to ask me to make any personal sacrifice I would do it gladly, more gladly than you could ever know—but this is not a personal matter. Could you assure me that if I were to comply with your father's request that the whole plan which has been drawn up would be abandoned ——"

"Why, that would ruin him," said Alice excitedly.

"Would it not be better to accept financial ruin," he said, "than to win success by the destruction of the interests of hundreds, perhaps of thousands? Why, Miss Dryden, if this project goes through the people behind it will steal millions and the price of their suc-

cess will still remain a burden on this community a quarter of a century after this crime has been perpetrated. A few would enjoy the unlawful benefits, but thousands would pay the price, and yet you ask me to lend assistance to this plan. If I were to do so I would be as dishonest as any one participating in the scheme, but I will not contaminate myself. I am honest and I must go on. You may despise me for the part I take, but I cannot act otherwise. Law and justice must take their course. If this is right it will be vindicated ; if not it will be punished."

Alice recoiled. " You treat my father as if he were a common thief and me as if I were a partner. How brutal ! " She had risen and Douglas rose also.

" I am sorry," he said simply, " very sorry."

She stood gazing at him, her chest heaving and her lips trembling. " I beg of you—I beg—for my father's sake I beg you to spare him."

Douglas bit his lips. " I cannot," he said.

She turned and walked away along the hall, her body shaken with sobs.

Douglas went slowly to his room, turned on the light, and flung himself upon the bed. His head was aching with a dull sickening pain and the brightness seemed to have been blotted from life. He had only suggested to Alice Dryden the morality of the scheme in which her father was involved. He had spared her the story of the crimes committed by Westmoreland and his associates, all a part of the general scheme to win a dishonest triumph in which she would participate as a principal beneficiary. Some day she might understand, but he could not tell her the whole truth now.

Pondering over the strange circumstances in which he found himself, Douglas fell off in a doze. He was awakened by a tapping on the door, and sat up on the side of the bed.

"Come in," he called. The door opened and Westmoreland entered. He was followed by Blair Parkinson.

CHAPTER XVI

EARTHQUAKE AND FIRE

"I TRUST you will pardon my intrusion, Mr. Atwell," said Mr. Westmoreland, "but matters of such importance have arisen concerning you that I felt it necessary to see you at once. I am glad that I find you still dressed."

"Just one moment," said Douglas sharply. "Do you come here with the sanction of Mr. Dryden or any one connected with him?"

Westmoreland hesitated a moment. "I have not spoken to Mr. Dryden concerning this matter. I am acting on my own responsibility, yet in behalf of his interests—as an attorney."

"No one connected with Mr. Dryden has asked you to come?"

"No," said Westmoreland, as he seated himself comfortably, and drew from his pocket a roll of papers. Blair Parkinson had

closed the door, and was standing with his back against it.

It was probably true, Douglas reflected, that neither Alice nor her father had sanctioned this visit, and that Westmoreland was playing an independent rôle. The atmosphere of perfect confidence which he assumed, together with the menacing attitude of Blair Parkinson, made Douglas feel that it would be the part of wisdom to listen, though furious anger surged within him, and impelled him with the desire to drive the visitors from the room.

"Well, what is your business with me?" said Douglas. "I think I made myself clear at our last meeting."

"You did, Mr. Atwell," said Westmoreland, calmly. "I think I perfectly understand your attitude. I merely doubt the wisdom of it, and I think perhaps you do not fully understand our side of the case. Let me explain."

It was difficult to listen with patience, but Douglas had resolved for his own safety to allow him to talk. For nearly an hour the lawyer pleaded his case, terminating with an

impassioned picture of the injustice to Mr. Dryden of allowing the matter to come before the courts.

"Can you not spare this excellent gentleman and his only child?" said Westmoreland.

"And allow your scheme to win? No," replied Douglas. "It is useless to discuss the matter."

Mr. Westmoreland nodded. "Well," said he, "I hoped that you would listen to reason. As you will not we will be compelled to use other methods. I think your attention has been invited to the fact that your record is not flawless. Unless you see fit to change your mind the press will publish the following the moment I give the word." He handed Douglas a typewritten copy of a statement announcing that an investigation was about to be made into his handling of the business of his office due to information that had leaked out, to the effect that he had demanded and had received a large bribe from one of the bidders for a contract. Reference was made to the receipt of the registered letter containing the check and the article terminated with

a brief résumé of the young officer's career, recalling the fact that he had been tried by general court martial at West Point for conduct unbecoming a cadet and gentleman, and was an outcast among his associates because of his record and of a report that he had negro blood in his veins. A feeling of nausea swept over Douglas as he read the last portions of this carefully-conceived attack. However false it might be, the effect of its publication could never be completely destroyed, and Westmoreland well knew that a successful suit for slander would afford but a poor compensation for the damage such a report would accomplish.

"Now, sir," said he, "the price of withholding that article is the return of the check and your withdrawal from active participation in this prosecution. The moment you sign this I agree to stop the publication of the article."

He thrust a paper in front of Douglas and handed him a fountain pen.

Blair Parkinson advanced toward him, his eyes blinking, his loose, flabby face terrible in its malevolence.

"Sign," said Westmoreland sharply ; "sign, and end the thing."

Douglas sprang to his feet and stood facing Blair Parkinson, his teeth set and fists clenched.

Suddenly a strange feeling of dizziness seized him, and a roar as of heavy guns firing in the distance sounded in his ears.

Parkinson reeled backward against the wall, his eyes staring wildly, seized the door, swung it open, and lurched into the hall.

With a scream of terror, Westmoreland fell to the floor, rolled upon his face and crawled toward the door.

Despite all his efforts Douglas had been thrown upon his back. About him crashed the plaster from the walls and ceiling, while the furniture reeled out from its place and staggered about the room and fell shattered together.

The great building swayed and rocked like a steamer at the mercy of a storm, and the groaning and crashing of its steels and timbers mingled with the screams of the guests who occupied its hundreds of rooms. The lights had gone out, and the heavy chandelier swing-

ing violently from side to side broke loose from its attachment and fell upon the bed, crushing it to the floor and sending the fragments of glass flying through the room.

In vain Douglas struggled to regain his feet. The ceiling gave way and the falling fragments struck him down again. He lay half conscious where he fell, vaguely expecting to feel the whole building lurch forward and bury him in the ruins with the hundreds of others who were guests within its walls. The crash of falling bricks could be heard in the street, but above it all rose a hoarse roar from the bowels of the earth where rocks to unknown depths were crushing and grinding together along the San Andreas rift a few miles distant.

Douglas lay helpless until the frightful uproar subsided and the floor ceased oscillating under him. Then he staggered to his feet and wiped the blood from his lacerated face. The dim light of morning revealed the havoc wrought by the hand of nature, a havoc so great that all things created by man seemed like cobwebs swept before a storm. In them Douglas had no interest. Animated

by the impulse which seizes all mankind when the earth shakes her crust in anger, he wanted to reach the open space beyond the reach of crashing timbers and falling walls.

He stepped over the shattered furniture and made his way into the hall. Westmoreland and Parkinson were gone, the papers they had brought with them were buried forever beneath débris which had crashed about them, but out in the corridor stood a panic-stricken man, half clad, but dragging a trunk as he stumbled about through the broken statuary and frantically called for the elevator boy. It needed no examination of the shaft to assure Douglas that the elevator was destroyed with all the other machinery in the building, and he said, "The elevator is not running. You'd better go down-stairs."

"Where are the stairs?" screamed the man, and Douglas seized him by the arm and led him in the proper direction. As he passed the room occupied by the Drydens, scream after scream came to his ears, and his companion, already panic-stricken, clapped his hands to his ears and rushed in horror down the stairs. Douglas saw him plunge madly

down the steps covered with débris, his trunk clattering behind him, and then he turned back along the corridor.

Again the scream came to his ears, and he seized the knob of Mr. Dryden's door and pushed it open. Through the dust which filled the room, he beheld Alice standing at the bedside of her father, struggling to raise a heavy beam which had been torn from its place in the ceiling and had fallen across the bed. She seized the end of the beam and tugged with all her might, then sank beside it in a frantic burst of tears.

Douglas rushed to her side.

"Oh, help him, Douglas, help him," she said, and her fingers clutched his sleeve, but Douglas needed no appeal.

He had seized the end of the beam and was throwing all his strength into the effort, but the weight of the débris upon it was too great. He rushed around the end of the bed, tore away the plaster and tiling that had fallen with it, and then returned. Throwing his shoulder beneath the heavy beam he straightened up. The veins rose in his face and neck, he felt his muscles quiver and the sharp edges

of the iron cut into his flesh, but the hundreds of pounds of iron slowly rose and he saw Alice thrust her shoulders under it and draw her father's body from beneath the mass which had crushed him. Fortunately its fall had been partially checked by the head of the bed.

Douglas released the beam and stumbled into a chair. For a moment he was too dizzy to act or to understand the words of gratitude which Alice poured forth, but the panic-stricken scream of "Fire! Fire!" resounding through the hall brought him quickly back to an appreciation of the emergency. Mr. Dryden was evidently unconscious and seriously hurt.

"We must get him out into the open," he said. "I will carry him. Let us go at once." He gathered the injured man in his arms and walked out of the room. Alice followed in silence, clinging to his sleeve, awed by the magnitude of the disaster and the danger that still seemed to threaten. The corridors were now filled with guests rushing madly for the stairs and pounding at the gates of the elevator shaft, while above the din and uproar a

shrill voice set up its terrifying scream, "Fire ! Fire ! Fire !"

Douglas glanced at Alice as he felt her trembling fingers tighten upon his arm. "We must keep cool," he said. "It is a time to be brave."

Her pale lips were pressed tightly together, and her blue eyes shone like stars, but she managed to answer, "I will try to be brave—but don't leave me."

Douglas began the descent of the stairs with his heavy burden in his arms. He was still dressed in his evening suit which he had had no opportunity to change, and down the white shirt and over his white vest, rent in several places and covered with dust, the blood from the wounded man's face dripped in a tiny stream. His own face was cut and bleeding, but otherwise he was unhurt.

In front of him the crowd struggled like madmen to escape, and behind shrill voices clamored for those in front to hurry. "Fire ! Fire !" rang the voice in the corridor above, and the loud clangor of the fire engines in the street lent reality to what had been a terrified cry. "Go on in front," roared the pressing

crowd behind and Douglas gasped for breath. On he stumbled, his arms aching, his feet feeling for the steps he could not see. A fall now would be fatal. Upon his body the maddened throng behind would trample till they reached the open.

At last the final flight was reached, and with trembling limbs he staggered through the door, turned to the right and sank exhausted in the street. Alice, helpless in the first stage of mental paralysis which follows overwhelming disaster, knelt beside her father and for the first time Douglas noticed that she was scantily clad.

"You need more clothing," said he, and he pulled off his dress coat and placed it about her shoulders. She accepted without a word and stood waiting his instructions. "We will go to the park," he said. "The buildings are not safe." Again he picked up his burden and moved up the street, Alice clinging to his sleeve.

About them lay a scene of ruin and confusion which no pen could adequately describe. Sidewalks were buried in brick and mortar. The fronts of houses were flung into

the street, revealing the interiors from which the terrified families had fled. Buildings rent from their foundations leaned their shattered roofs against each other, and here and there a lighter structure lay crushed like an egg-shell. Telegraph and telephone wires, tangled in confusion, filled the street, the sidewalks of which were bulged and warped and crushed by the mighty twisting of the earth, which had torn the solidest works of man asunder as if made of pasteboard.

The entire populace of San Francisco had leaped from their beds and fled to the street, carrying with them such things as they could seize in their flight. No one was more than half dressed, yet the bravest trembled at the thought of returning for the necessary clothing to their ruined homes, lest another paroxysm of nature should engulf them. Some wept in uncontrollable grief, some stood mute and awestruck, some desperately fled through the street, expecting each moment to feel the earth sink beneath them and engulf them and all that remained of the doomed city. In their flight each carried the thing which at the moment seemed most dear—a

child, a parrot, a cat, and in some cases a trunk. With no thought for anything else, they rushed blindly through the street—where? There was no order in their movements; as many rushed toward the center of the city as rushed in the opposite direction toward the outskirts. Meeting, they stopped, shouted at each other; some rushed on, others retraced their steps, then turned again or fled in a new direction.

Through them Douglas slowly made his way in silence. A block from the hotel, he halted upon the brink of a break in the street out of which the water gushed from a broken main. He leaped across with his burden, helped Alice and went on. The buildings in front had collapsed, the fragments of a wagon were visible, crushed flat to the earth, the hoofs of horses protruding from the edge of the piled up débris. A little farther on an empty vegetable cart stood deserted in the street, the animal trembling in dumb terror, expressing his fear by a series of loud snorts. He had regained his feet after having been thrown to the ground, and the reins, deserted by the driver, were dragging in the street.

Douglas laid down his burden, seized the reins, and pacified the animal. Then he assisted Alice into the wagon, and placed Mr. Dryden beside her, sprang to the seat and drove toward Golden Gate Park.

In every direction fire-bells were clanging and down in the lower districts an ominous cloud of smoke was pouring over the doomed city. The water mains had been snapped like dry twigs, the fire-engines were powerless, and the destruction of San Francisco, begun by the earthquake, was to be consummated by fire.

Gazing in silence at this terrifying spectacle Alice Dryden, sitting on the floor of an Italian's vegetable wagon with her father's head resting upon her lap, entered the park, where she and Douglas had walked but a few days before and which they had left in her father's automobile.

Douglas turned out to the side of the little lake in Golden Gate Park and stopped. The tidal wave scare had subsided almost as suddenly as it had begun, and a sense of security came back with the arrival within the green fields unmarked by the disaster which prevailed in the city streets.

Douglas laid upon the ground the ragged blanket which had served as a seat cushion for the poor Italian who owned the wagon and gently placed Mr. Dryden upon it. With his hand he scooped up some water and poured it between the wounded man's teeth and washed away the blood from his face. He was still unconscious, and it was impossible to know whether his head was fatally crushed or not.

Douglas knelt over him and felt his pulse. It was beating feebly, and his rugged face showed signs of recovery. What was to be done?

Perhaps a doctor could be found, but no medicine. Perhaps the patient could be taken away to the next city and cared for by competent surgeons. Already the crowds were streaming into the parks, and by night thousands without food or shelter would be huddled together in the open fields. It was no place for either the sick or the well, but Mr. Dryden solved the problem himself. He opened his eyes and raised his hand to his head, while his face writhed with pain.

"Where am I?" he said.

"In Golden Gate Park," said Douglas.

The wounded man glanced up through his swollen eyelids. "So you brought me through it, did you?"

Douglas made no reply. "Shall I make arrangements to send you to some city east of here where you may secure treatment?" he asked.

"No, thank you," replied Mr. Dryden. "I am going to fight it out right here. I will be all right to-morrow. We can rough it, can't we, Alice?"

"Yes, daddy," she replied, and back into her eyes came that look of confidence which had been hers from infancy.

"I will get you food and shelter as soon as I can. I suppose everything is wrecked at home, or else I would ask you to come there, but Gertrude will help you as soon as I can get word to her. Now I must be going." He looked at the great cloud of smoke which was rising over the city. "No one can foretell what will happen before to-morrow."

"Come back soon," said Alice, and standing up in his dress coat as naturally as if she were in the parlor of the hotel held out her

hand to bid him good-bye. Douglas hurried back along the drive and turned down Market Street. He was a curious spectacle, but not more curious than thousands who stood about in the streets. Excitement had somewhat subsided and in place of the overpowering terror which marked the first half hour after the catastrophe a stupor had settled over the people which rendered them helpless. Men, women and children sat in the street, gazing blankly at their ruined homes as if patiently waiting the completion of the destruction which had begun. Others roamed about in idle curiosity as if in a museum. Beneath the collapsed buildings there were the dead, but many more lay pinned under fallen beams and walls and they must be rescued. In the wrecked banks lay millions of dollars, in the great business houses property of untold value which must be guarded from the mob when within six hours the pangs of hunger would seize upon the hundreds of thousands who now stood in the street, homeless, penniless.

As Douglas advanced through the crowd along Market Street, he saw the smoke and

flame burst through the window of a great building in the commercial district, and the firemen, helpless for lack of sufficient water, were forced to give ground. With a tremendous roar, the flame shot up, and the dense volume of smoke leaped toward the sky. The crowd stood awestruck, and then a great cheer arose from thousands of throats as down through the shattered streets marched a column of United States soldiers, rifles slanting from the shoulders, every movement indicative of the power to do and the will to do it.

General Funston had come to the relief of the stricken city.

"They are coming from all the forts, God bless them," yelled a policeman. And Douglas rushed along Market Street to join his battalion and lend a hand in the great fight which had just begun to save the city.

A block from the ferry he saw Benedict riding furiously through the street on a fire-engine. "My house is on fire," he shouted as he whirled past, his face livid with excitement. "I am fighting to save my documents."

CHAPTER XVII

A THRILLING RESCUE

BETWEEN the long line of ruined buildings from the shattered roofs of which dense clouds of smoke were pouring, laced here and there with a tongue of flame, Douglas dashed on toward the ferry. The problem which had seemed to him so momentous but a few hours before had suddenly lost its importance, and he thought only of the great duty before the troops of saving the city from destruction and of bringing succor to the distressed multitude rendered homeless by the terrible catastrophe.

He reached the landing and sprang aboard the boat, which was leaving with the message from headquarters directing the troops at Fort McDowell to cross at once and report for duty in maintaining order in conjunction with the municipal police.

Rushing to his house upon landing, Douglas found the family up, and awestruck at the magnitude of the disaster, but unhurt and eager to help. Roderick had already bor-

rowed a uniform from Douglas' wardrobe and had joined the battalion, volunteering for the work at hand. He had been thrown from bed by the shock of the quake, but dressed at his leisure, and finding vacant the rooms which Douglas and the Drydens had occupied, he left the hotel at once for the post.

"It is such a relief to see you safe, Douglas," said Gertrude, as he brought water and washed the blood and dirt from his face. "Had you not come in on that boat mother would have collapsed. Do you know what became of the Drydens?"

Douglas briefly explained that they were safe in Golden Gate Park, but without proper clothing, food or shelter.

"Can you loan Miss Dryden something?" said Douglas.

"Yes, indeed," said Gertrude; "everything I have."

"All right," said Douglas; "will you fix up what you think might be needed and I will get it shipped across and see that it reaches the Drydens as soon as possible—but don't cross yourself. There is too much danger."

Douglas dashed up to his room. Nearly

every article of furniture had been thrown to the floor, the window had been shattered and the chimney thrown to the ground. The roof had partially collapsed, but the building was habitable, and life could continue on the post with almost the accustomed routine regularity.

In a few moments Douglas had thrown aside his bedraggled dress suit and was fully equipped in his neat-fitting olive drab. He stopped only long enough to secure a bite from the kitchen, and then dashed out of the door and across parade to join his command.

"I will be back for the things for the Drydens," he called, as he hurried away, and Gertrude ran to her room to secure such articles as she thought might be needed.

The company was forming when Douglas arrived, and reported to the battalion commander for duty. He had not been relieved from his work at Department Headquarters, but in emergencies one must act, not wait for instructions, and Douglas knew that his superiors would approve his going where the hardest duty was to be performed.

The order had already been given to send

to San Francisco all the tentage that could be spared, and in rear of the company Corporal Klondyke Jones was loading a wagon with big conical wall tents and with all the energy of his old frontier days was making things "hot" in getting ready for the big emergency for the handling of which they were all so well trained. Roland McGrew was there working like a Trojan, his blue eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Have the wagon stop at my house, Corporal Jones," said Douglas. "I am putting on my field equipment for some people who are stranded in the park."

In a few moments the companies were ready, and Douglas, commanding his old company in the absence of a captain and first lieutenant, received the first sergeant's report. The companies moved rapidly to their places, and the battalion commander's voice floated out over the parade-ground.

"Right shoulder, arms! Squads right, march! Full step. March!" and the battalion, rifles at the right shoulder, belts filled with ball cartridges, swung out in column of squads toward the ferry. Over in the city

confusion and disorder reigned supreme. The organization of society under which the people lived for hundreds of years had been shattered in one convulsion of nature which lasted less than a minute. No one was competent to give orders, no one compelled to obey. Looking into the future for the brief space of but a few hours, the leader trained to deal with men could easily foresee that only the iron hand of discipline could bring order out of the chaos in those smoking streets filled with débris, and from which the populace must be driven, leaving behind property valued at millions.

Hundreds of thousands were homeless ; in a few hours they would be hungry ; at the end of a single day of suffering the peaceful citizen of yesterday would become the member of a mob to-day howling for food and ready to use violence to get it. In that emergency might makes right, and woe betide the community in which the right is interpreted by the mob.

Douglas glanced down at his loaded revolver, and looked back at the column of soldiers of the republic, the representatives of law and order when all the other bulwarks have been leveled to the dust.

The wagon under Corporal Jones was stopping at his quarters, and he saw Gertrude bring out a neatly packed basket and turn it over for delivery. His bedding roll for field service was tossed upon the load, and the wagon started for the ferry with Roland McGrew in canvas leggings and campaign hat perched upon the seat with the driver.

The battalion filed upon the boat and as they swung out upon the bay the eyes of all were turned upon the city. Along a front nearly three miles in extent, dense columns of smoke rose above the housetops, while a strong breeze was each moment fanning the flames beneath to increased activity. What chance was there of arresting the onward sweep of that fearful conflagration until nothing was left to furnish more fuel for the flames? But the battalion was crossing the bay to stop it.

The boat drew up at the wharf upon which the wrecked roof lay scattered and the battalion marched through the débris and swung into line with the precision of a movement on parade. A short distance away the flames creeping on toward the wharves were met

by the stream of water from the battle-ship "Ohio," while the marines who had gone ashore were fighting like demons to save the ships at the wharves.

"Squads right, march! Full step, march!" came the command, and once more the column treaded its way through the tangled wires, crossed the cracks which gaped in the street and marched between the shattered buildings until it arrived at the heart of the business section, several blocks beyond the raging conflagration.

"Battalion, halt!"

Down came the rifles, and the men stood at ease, eagerly awaiting the orders which were to carry them into this fight against one of the cruelest enemies of mankind.

The orders were brief—"Patrol Market Street and prevent looting. Shoot if necessary to protect property."

The sections were divided up, and Douglas saw himself assigned to the block on which stood the banking house of Shelton, Love & Co., where he and Benedict and Rory had gone, fired with a determination to discover the name of the man who had signed the

check. What vanity it all seemed now. In the vaults of the great stone structure, whose sides were cleft asunder, untold wealth lay but partially protected. No hand must touch it.

"No one will be allowed to enter," said Douglas to the sentinel he posted over the building.

"There are no passes. All must be driven back beyond this line and kept there. Close all saloons, enter no building unless I tell you to do so." On down the street he sped until the last sentinel was placed, close to the exhausted firemen, who struggled in vain to arrest the advance of the flames. To each he imparted his instructions, and then hastened back to his company. There sat Klondyke Jones with his wagon load of tentage.

"How did you get through, Jones?" asked Douglas in astonishment.

"There ain't no place a team of mules can't get through," replied the corporal, as he folded up his long black snake whip. "I've gone through harder places than that."

"Well," said Douglas, "throw off the company stuff at this corner; then take the rest

of the load to Golden Gate Park and find the Drydens," and Douglas described the spot near the little lake where he had left the stricken man and his daughter.

"Set up a tent for them, Jones, and put up my field cots. Make them as comfortable as you can and then rejoin us. Say that I am sorry I can't come myself, and—by the way—where is Roland McGrew?"

"He lit out jest as soon as we struck shore. Cut for home to see if his people was safe."

Douglas glanced with deep anxiety in the direction in which Roland lived.

The fire must have already invaded the district. What might happen to that poor mother and child in the heartless rush of the mob to safety should they fail in their efforts to escape! No mercy would be shown them, and no one would turn back to help a comrade downtrodden in the *mêlée*. But Douglas could give his time only to the actual dangers which confronted him. Each problem must be solved as it developed. The line of sentinels established, it was necessary to gain a fuller knowledge of the situation.

"Remain here, Sergeant Collins," he said

to the first sergeant, "and personally see that no one enters that building," and he pointed to the great banking house over which Mr. Love presided and in which the firm of Jacobs, Sharp & Co. held its regular meetings.

"No one will enter, sir," said the sergeant, saluting, and Douglas turned away. "I am going down the street," he said, "to see what we can do to check the fire."

He started off at once—inspecting the sentinels on the way to see that each one understood his orders. The company had been on the ground only a few minutes, but already control of the situation had been gained. The stupefied people were giving away before the steady pressure of the sentinels, and were falling beyond the danger line, thus permitting rapid and coördinated effort to resist the progress of the fire.

"To the parks," shouted the sergeant at the head of the street, "every one to the parks," and the call was taken up and reëchoed till thousands had heard and were slowly moving to obey. Yet others stood stricken with curiosity to see the onward sweep of the increasing conflagration.

Douglas had reached the point at which the firemen were making their first desperate stand. Only a tiny stream of water was available, as the main had been shattered, and the precious water was gushing uselessly over the earth miles away while for lack of it here the flames were gaining in intensity as every moment passed.

"What can we do?" said a big fellow, whose face was dripping with perspiration, and whose hair and eyebrows were singed by the fierce heat of the burning buildings, yet he stuck to his post and continued to play the stream in a hopeless effort to stay the fire.

The flame burst from the upper story above them, and with a loud roar swept against the adjacent hotel building. Suddenly the firemen gave way and turned their attention to the next point of danger.

Douglas watched for a moment.

"The only way we can stop this fire," he said, "is to destroy the buildings in front of it. Otherwise the whole city will be burned. But how can we destroy them?"

It was clear that within another hour the fire would have eaten its way through the

great edifice whose shattered side it was now licking, perhaps would have traversed the block.

Douglas glanced up at the broken front and thought of the scene in the hotel he had left. It was quite possible that human beings might be pinned beneath the débris too badly hurt to know the death which now awaited them. Across the street he ran, through the shattered columns and up the broken stairs to the top floor. Already the flames had reached through the windows and the rooms were filled with smoke, but through the flames he could see two bodies lying upon the floor in the adjacent room. There was no hope, unassisted, of excavating the bodies from the débris which imprisoned them in time to escape the flames which already reached through the windows and filled the rooms with suffocating odors.

Douglas ran to the window and shouted to the sentinel below : " Call for the guard ! "

" The guard ! No. 9 ! " rang out the alarm, repeated from mouth to mouth until it reached the company in front of the Shelton, Love & Co. Banking House. A squad fell in at the

jump, swung about and came down the street at a run.

"Come up!" shouted Douglas, and the men sped up the steps, three steps at a time. "We are going to get out two bodies in that next room," he said. "Rip off the doors and jam them into the windows, so as to shut out the flames while we work. Get at it, men. There is not a minute to lose."

It was the right squad of the company which responded to the call, averaging six feet in stature and one hundred and ninety-five pounds to the man. Like the trained athletes they were, they flung themselves upon the door, smashed the hinges with the butts of their rifles or ripped them from their fastenings, and were ready for their rush against the tongues of flames which were licking the ceiling and blistering the walls.

"Form in line, men," yelled Douglas. "Now all together." With doors in front of them, the squad rushed forward and struck the windows with a crash. The flames roared against the doors as they shot into place, but the room was safe temporarily, and a line of retreat was open to the stairs.

"Finnegan and Moran, stand by to guard the windows," said Douglas. "The rest come with me," and he rushed into the room, the ceiling of which had collapsed, imprisoning the two occupants of the room, who lay unconscious upon the floor.

Douglas seized the broken rafters, and together with his men began the work of rescue. The fire had been excluded from the room, but the heat was intense, and the smoke enveloped the workers, filling their lungs with the poisonous fumes and bringing the tears streaming down their faces.

"We must hurry," urged Douglas as he glanced over his shoulder and saw the men at the windows gasping for breath, while between the cracks of the door and over their tops the flames were pushing in tiny jets which indicated that the fire was gaining rapidly in power.

Gasping and coughing, the men worked on with the utmost vigor. The débris was flung aside and the body of a woman with her little girl lay revealed, face downward, upon the floor.

"Help me with the woman, Blake," said

Douglas. "Corporal Riley, take the child," and he stooped over to raise the prostrate form, when Moran reeled back from the window and fell unconscious on the floor. One of the men leaped forward to take his place, but the doors, no longer supported, fell inward, and the flames swept across the room with a loud roar. It was out of the question to attempt repeating the operation of shutting the flames from the room. It was now impossible to push one's way more than a few feet beyond the door. Exit to the stairs they had ascended was cut off. Douglas rushed to the window and looked out. There was no visible means of escape. He entered the next room, but the doors were locked.

"We must get out this way, men," he said. "Smash the door."

He ran back to the flame-swept room, from which Moran had already been dragged by the men. Finnegan was visible through the smoke, standing at his post, but his body was swaying and his wide-open mouth indicated that he would last but a few moments longer.

"Let go, Finnegan," yelled Douglas, "and go down the stairs. We will get out through

the other door." Then he turned and prepared to carry out the unconscious woman.

"The door is open," shouted the corporal, as a crash resounded from the adjacent room, and Douglas, assisted by Blake, picked up the woman and hurried out upon the landing with the squad following. As they emerged, Finnegan rushed wild-eyed through the hall.

"The stairs are on fire, lieutenant," he cried. "We are cut off, sir."

"Where is the fire escape?"

"It's on the side which is burning," said the corporal. "We can't get out there."

"This way," said Douglas as his gaze fell upon the battered gate of an elevator shaft. The door was ajar and at the bottom of the pit lay the car which had been left there the night before.

The young officer laid down the unconscious woman, and reaching inside the shaft seized the cables and pulled vigorously.

"They are safe," said he. "At any rate this is the only way out. Get all the sheets you can find in that room."

He pulled off his blouse and shoes and flung them down the shaft. "Sling your

guns, men; we're going down." Then tying the sheet about the woman's body he swung her across his back, rose to his feet and seized the cable. The men stood aghast. Five stories below lay the bottom of the shaft where a mass of broken timbers and jagged wires would pierce his body if he fell. It was a feat to descend that great depth supporting only one's own weight, but to attempt it with an additional burden of more than one hundred pounds seemed like madness.

"It's my only chance," said Douglas as he gazed down the shaft. "Swing the child, corporal, and follow me."

He swung off over the abyss, wrapped his legs about the cable, and hand over hand he started down. One story. He rested a moment and gazed at the faces staring eagerly upon him. Then he went on. Two stories, three stories, only two more remained. He gasped. The terrible burden was cutting into his shoulders, and restricting his breathing. Could he last the remaining distance? Hand over hand, hand over hand, and each time he released his clutch it was more difficult to resist the slipping which if one started at that

height meant certain death. A single flight remained, and he heard voices resounding through the hall. A dozen members of the company rushed to the bottom of the shaft, and he heard Rory O'Connor's voice.

"Hang on, Dug. I'm getting below you. Stick to it, old boy, for just a moment longer."

Rory swung open the gate of the shaft, and stepped out on top of the cage, his arms outstretched. Douglas came on, each movement sending pains shooting through his arms and legs now almost powerless to resist the slip and the resulting crash.

On—on—he came; his feet touched Rory's hand, and he shot downward and fell headlong through the door into Rory's arms and lay helpless on the floor, while the cheer from above was drowned by a louder one from the company below. Rory untied the limp form from his back, and then sprang to his feet with a cry.

"Great heavens, Douglas, it's my sister! She was to meet me here to-morrow, and I had no idea she had arrived last night." He dropped to his knees and chafed the cold

hand and brushed back the disheveled hair from her face. "You saved her, Dug," said Rory huskily, "and I can never half repay you—but I am with you through thick and thin as long as I live. There is not another man in the army who could have performed that feat."

A sergeant had hurried up the portion of the stairs yet free from the flame, and had swung open the gate to permit the escape of the rest of the squad. One by one they descended and filed down-stairs to the street, eyes wide open with wonder and admiration at the wonderful feat accomplished by "the gamest officer in the army."

Litters had already been secured and Rory accompanied his sister and her beautiful child as they were carried away amid the loud hurrahs of the spectators to the Emergency Hospital which had already been established.

Douglas recovered his strength in a few moments and walked into the street. The whole upper portion of the building was enveloped in flames, and no amount of labor could save it from destruction. The firemen were backing up before the steady progress

of the conflagration and already the members of the company were working side by side with the members of the department whose great exertions were beginning to break down their strength.

It was necessary to organize a search at once through the buildings in the path of the fire to prevent a repetition of the narrow escape which had just occurred. Detachments were sent flying through the buildings in which persons might be imprisoned by débris awaiting the oncoming fire to consume them where they lay just as Roderick's sister had lain, unconscious of the fate which awaited her.

Along the line of sentinels the young officer moved and heard the report of each. Bodies were lying in a dozen places, and he distributed his forces to extricate them in the shortest possible time. He had reached the place designated as the headquarters of the company when the first sergeant reported.

"Sir, the sentinels are having trouble getting the people back and in preventing the looting of the building just outside their post. A man has been trying to get into the bank

building across the street, sir. He says he must get in, that thousands of dollars' worth of papers are lying about. What shall I do, sir?"

"Come with me," said Douglas, and as he passed he directed the sentinels to follow him. They walked to a point from which a break in the wall of the great building was visible.

"Do you see that line of rubbish ten paces from the wall?" he said.

"Yes, sir," replied the sentinel.

"Well, that is the dead line for this building. Shoot if any one attempts to cross it. No one must be allowed to enter that bank. Remain here, sentinel, and watch that line."

Douglas walked back with the sergeant to the line beyond which the people were not permitted to advance. From the edge of the crowd came a loud call: "Lieutenant Atwell."

Douglas looked about and saw Tom Jenkins standing a little in front of the line. "Will you let me come in and help, lieutenant? I'll work in the kitchen or do anything you let me. Can I come, sir?"

"Yes," said Douglas, "come ahead."

CHAPTER XVIII

FIGHTING THE FLAMES

It was not according to regulations that Tom Jenkins, a military convict, should be permitted to associate with the company from which he had been dishonorably discharged, but all established forms had lost their reason for existence in the overwhelming catastrophe which had overtaken the city. Jenkins had shown his courage and fidelity and was eager to escape from the life which had brought him to disgrace. There was need of a man of Jenkins' courage, and Douglas accepted his assistance, not as a soldier, but to assist him as a messenger or in other capacity in which he might be needed. Events were soon to prove the wisdom of this act.

"What does the lieutenant wish me to do?" said Jenkins.

"Look up little Roland McGrew," said Douglas, "and see if you can help him out."

He has gone to his home to find how his people got through the quake."

"Yes, sir," said Jenkins, and he broke through the crowd and disappeared.

Douglas went back down the line. Every man in the company was working desperately to contribute his share to the tremendous task before them. The sentinels kept the thoroughfares free from the curious crowd, while the remaining members performed their assigned tasks with a vigor which augured well for the ultimate success of the fight which they were waging. From the buildings in the path of the flames the dead and wounded were rescued one by one and carried to the nearest emergency hospital for treatment or for burial in that rude way which necessity recognizes on battle-field and in emergencies such as these. A second section stood guard over the property which the mob must be forced to respect. A third remained in reserve, while facing the fire and side by side with the tired firemen the remaining section of the company assisted in handling the fire hose, in sweeping away all débris in the path of the fire which might assist its progress.

Yet in spite of all their efforts the scattered fire was uniting in one great conflagration.

Recognizing this fact from the reports which came in from the long skirmish line across the city, the military authorities were already urging that the demolition of buildings be started at once. It was equally clear that the work of demolition should begin at some distance from the blazing buildings in order that a tract might be destroyed of sufficient width to prevent the flames from leaping the zone and continuing the work of destruction on the other side.

Anticipating the necessity which now became apparent, the acting chief of the fire department had already requested that all available explosives with the men to handle them be sent to check the fire, as the fire department, deprived of sufficient water supply, was practically helpless. Pursuant to this request, the field artillery, with caissons loaded with forty-eight barrels of powder, dashed through the streets, followed by wagons hauling a reserve supply, together with three hundred pounds of dynamite secured from the civil engineers of the engineer department.

Trotting up to the hall of justice, the battery commander reported to the mayor, and the work of demolition was speedily authorized. Fortunately a large additional quantity of dynamite was available at the California Powder Works, and this together with a quantity of gun cotton from Mare Island made the supply adequate to the demands of the occasion. From every direction there came the tramp, tramp, tramp of the rugged soldiers as, with rifles swung over their shoulders, they marched to the fight for the safety of the city.

From Angel Island and Alcatraz came the infantry and coast artillery, from Fort Mason the engineers, from Monterey, Alcatraz and the Presidio came coast artillery, cavalry and field artillery, while out along the telegraph lines unbroken by the shock of the terrible quake ran the commanding general's call for reënforcements. News passes quickly through a crowd, and when it was known that the President had ordered forward all the tentage and rations in the possession of army garrisons the gratitude of the bereaved people expressed itself in a humble prayer of thanks.

Down Market Street moved a section of the battery, and the young officer, alighting from his horse, rushed up to Douglas for consultation.

"It is useless," said the latter, "to destroy buildings so close to the fire. We are being forced back at the rate of a block every two hours and before a building could be demolished the fire would leap across and continue its progress."

Rushing to the roof of an adjacent building, they viewed the scene in front. The entire wholesale and retail sections of the city were one seething mass of flames, while the advance along Market Street was forcing a steady retreat toward VanNess Avenue, while throughout other portions of the city to the east isolated fires blazed furiously and it was merely a question of time as to when the whole front would unite and move onward completing the destruction of the city.

"Here we must stop the advance," said the artillery officer, and together they dashed back to the waiting battery.

Sparks were falling in showers about the teams, and on the tops of the caissons, but

risks must be taken. In front the firemen and soldiers were fighting their game but losing fight, retarding but not arresting the steady advance of the roaring flames. Only extensive demolition could stop it.

Sticks of dynamite were pulled from the caissons, and holding them in the bosoms of their olive drab shirts the soldiers hurried to the buildings designated for destruction. Large columns of steel resting on concrete foundation supported the main structure, and about these columns the sticks of dynamite were tied. Cutting a hole in one of the sticks a detonator was inserted in the cavity and a small hand dynamo was connected with the detonator.

"Get every one back under cover," said the artillery commander, "and we will set it off."

Back came the exhausted men, faces scorched and blistered under the intense heat which they had now been facing for hours. The firemen withdrew, and one more block was abandoned to the raging flames.

"All is ready," said Douglas.

Down plunged the handle of the dynamo,

and the earth shook with the shock of the explosion which followed, bringing the terrified people to their feet with a start in the fear that the convulsions of nature had been resumed.

Douglas and his brother officer hastened to the shattered building. The columns had been snapped off like twigs beneath the foot. The roof had fallen and the walls had collapsed in places, but the steel framework of the building held firmly in place and it was clear that the work of demolition had only begun.

"I will help you," said Douglas, "if you wish. The fire is gaining on us rapidly."

"Good," said the artilleryman. "We will have to blow the building to fragments to get it down."

The company came forward, and with characteristic eagerness sprang into the building and began the work of destruction. Beneath the corners of the wall the dynamite was packed, the exposed stringers were wrapped with it and the joints on the maintenance of which the stability of the building depended were encased in the sticks. Through

the building the men crawled like bridge builders or steeple climbers, and at last the work was done and all returned to a place of safety.

Once more the plunger sank, and the crash of flying timbers and falling walls announced the collapse of the great building on the erection of which hundreds of thousands of dollars had been expended.

"We will have to blow up the next one also," said the artillery officer, and the weary men resumed the work of destruction along the front. The roar of explosions sounded all along the front as they worked, and the sun hung blood red in the canopy of smoke only a few hours above the horizon when the second building succumbed and lay prostrate beside its neighbor, but the roaring flames were shooting from the roof of the adjacent building and reaching around the flanks of the little clearing which had been made.

"We will have to work faster, men," said Douglas, and he set the example by his own activity. Stolidly they worked, their wet faces dripping with perspiration and their weary arms trembling with the effort they

had made during the day, but their work was in vain.

The burning fragments falling through the broken roofs of adjacent buildings found ample fuel to fan them into flame, and before the workers were aware of the situation the buildings in their rear were burning and they were compelled once more to fall back.

From end to end of the line the same scenes were enacted. Before the fire the line of fighters was giving steadily back.

No opportunity had been given the soldiers to eat since they left the garrison, and the canteens in which they carried a small supply of water were empty. Yet the struggle had only begun, and sleep for them during the approaching night was impossible. Slowly the watching crowds dispersed, and as darkness settled over the city which had appeared so beautiful the night before, more than one hundred thousand homeless persons were gathered in the parks, bivouacked in the open, or huddled together in tents which the army had furnished.

It was nearly eight o'clock when the company operating under Lieutenant Atwell

broke into reliefs, part to fight the fire, while the rest hurried to the corner where Corporal Klondyke Jones had established the kitchen for the company.

Douglas, sitting upon the sidewalk, drank his coffee from his tin cup and ate his portion of potatoes, bacon and onions from his meat can resting on his knees. His face was black from the smoke and dust in which he had been enveloped, his limbs ached and his eyes were bloodshot from loss of sleep and the poisonous gases to which they had been subjected, but he could neither rest nor sleep. The fight against the fire must be resumed just as soon as the men were able to stand the strain. If the fight were prolonged it would be necessary to divide up into reliefs, and allow some to rest, but as yet none sought rest and all were eager to fight on in the hope of checking the flame before morning.

As Douglas sat with his humble but hasty meal upon his knees, his eyes fell upon the hotel, now a smoking ruin, from which he had escaped that morning with the body of Mr. Dryden. It seemed that years had passed since that terrible moment in which

the first convulsion shook the earth and he saw the tottering buildings grind their sides together and then fall away crashing to the ground. He thought of the interview with Mr. Dryden, and later with Alice, and the visit of Westmoreland and his criminal associate to force him to yield to their plans.

How vain it all seemed now. The fabric on which they had built their hopes of wealth had been shattered like an egg-shell, and probably Mr. Dryden's fortune had vanished with it, yet this sturdy master of finance had by no means accepted defeat. Consciousness had no sooner returned to him than he stoutly declined to be removed from the city limits and chose to see the end of his fight where he lay.

"There can be no doubt, then," reflected Douglas, "that he still entertains hope of ultimate success in spite of the destruction of a part at least of the city. On what could he found his hopes of success?" Douglas glanced down the street at the banking house over which Mr. Love presided. Illumined by the glare of the fire several blocks beyond he could see the sentinel watching the build-

ing around which Douglas had drawn a dead line.

He rose, and to his astonishment saw Alice Dryden and Roderick O'Connor approaching.

"Rory has told me of your rescue of his sister this morning from the—— Hotel," said Alice as she grasped his hand, "and I am as grateful as he. Lucile was my playmate as a child and my classmate in college, and I loved her as one would love a sister." Alice's voice trembled a little as she spoke. "I could not thank you properly this morning for your courage and kindness, but you know how I feel. I cannot express my gratitude. No one could, for such a service."

Alice looked down upon the gaping crevice which the earthquake had torn along the street, and tears seemed swimming in her eyes.

"It was nothing," said Douglas. "Any one would have been glad to help had it been his good fortune to be on the spot. Luck favored me and I was glad to help."

"But many people were there," said Alice. "I ran into the hall and begged men to help me, but they flung my hands away when

I caught them by the sleeve—until you came ——” She stopped and bit her lips.

“Is Mr. Dryden better?” asked Douglas, anxious to change the subject.

“Yes, thank you,” said Alice. “He regained consciousness and soon sat up, but he could not walk about. A doctor whom we know came and said he was not seriously hurt, but that he must not attempt to sit up for a few days. While he was there your Corporal Jones came with the tent and chairs and cots, and made us as comfortable as at home. He was a most interesting character, and I kept him as long as I could. He talked about nothing but the lieutenant, and promised to come back if the lieutenant would give him permission. Please let him come, Mr. Atwell, he is so interesting.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Douglas; “I will send him every day.”

“Papa insisted upon knowing how the fire was progressing,” said Alice as she gazed down the street. “I was afraid he would get up if I did not see in person, so I came with Roderick. Where is the Shelton, Love & Co. Bank Building?”

"That sentinel is standing in front of it," said Douglas, with awakened interest. "The line of sentinels extends down to the burning buildings, and the last one is in front of the banking house."

Alice stood gazing intently at the scene in front, her fair chin protruding slightly with that look of resolution which made her seem so like a man, yet none the less a woman.

"How fast is it burning?" she asked.

"About a block every two hours," answered Douglas.

"I must be going back to daddy," she said abruptly. "Come to see him if you can. He is very grateful indeed for what you have done." She moved away in the darkness with Roderick, treading her way through the streets with that air of complete self-possession which had been her leading characteristic since childhood.

Douglas washed his mess pan, left his equipment at the kitchen and walked back toward the scene of the conflagration. The fight for the saving of the city no longer required his presence on the immediate scene of action.

The plan had developed, and each man worked away at his assigned task.

In front of the banking house he stopped and watched the sentinel standing in the shadow of the wall, guarding the openings which allowed entrance to the interior.

"Hello, Atwell," came a hoarse voice, and he turned to see Benedict standing in his shirt-sleeves, his hair disheveled and his face smeared and dirty. "It's all up with me," he continued dejectedly. "My house caught fire among the first. I ran to the fire house and you saw me ride past on an engine, but it was no use. We couldn't get sufficient water, and my three years' work has gone up in smoke." He lowered his voice. "The check and all the papers I secured from Westmoreland were burned, and I am right where we started."

"Then you cannot prosecute your case?"

"No," said Benedict, "not unless I can get into that banking house and find the papers which are lying about. There will be an abundance of evidence. All I need is a half an hour inside. Will you let me go in?"

"No," said Douglas, "you cannot go in."

I am going to do exactly as I promised, but I cannot favor you in this fight. If you want those papers you will have to get them by regular legal process, and that ought not to be difficult."

"But the other side is after them too, and they can secure them. Are you going to let them win?"

"No," said Douglas; "you have the law all on your side. If that building survives the fire you can get all you desire, but until the legal authority for entering is shown me no one will cross that line. It is the dead line in this game."

Benedict ran his fingers through his hair. "Then, my boy—I win," he said as he hurried away in the darkness.

Douglas resumed his walk along the line of sentinels. From end to end of the line the roar of the exploding dynamite indicated the location of the retreating battle-line and suggested that the fight was each hour becoming more desperate.

Along his own front a temporary success had been gained, but the night wind had sprung up, and the fagged-out men, with sink-

ing heart, saw the clouds of sparks rise on the breeze and settle upon the buildings beyond the area which they had destroyed.

The majority of the people had left the streets, but the sentinels reported that figures were flitting about the buildings, and that it was impossible to know whether they were civilian laborers, the firemen or low scoundrels who had seized upon the cover of darkness to snatch what they could.

"They must be stopped," said Douglas. "No one must be allowed to enter buildings. Shoot if necessary."

As he spoke the call of the sentinel in front of the banking house came to his ears —

"Halt! Who's there? Halt! halt! Come to a halt or I'll fire."

The sharp crack of a rifle rang out upon the night air, and Douglas ran at top speed to the sentinel who stood in front of the banking house, his hand on the bolt of his rifle.

"What was it?" said Douglas.

"Some one showed up on that wall, sir, and was pushing through the window, so I took a shot at him."

"Had he been in the building?" asked Douglas anxiously.

"No, sir, he had not, but I missed. He got away."

CHAPTER XIX

A MAN IN THE BANKING HOUSE

THE sentinel in front of the banking house could give no description of the man at whom he fired, and the most careful search of the premises revealed no indications of his whereabouts.

The man had approached through an alley and under cover of darkness had clambered up the pile of stones along the interior side of the building, from which he managed to reach the top of the shattered wall where the sentinel saw him silhouetted against the blazing buildings in the rear. To reach that position required a degree of physical strength possessed only by a few, while the selection of the particular avenue of approach to the building suggested familiarity with the scene such as would be possessed by no mere looter reconnoitering for chance spoils.

"No," reflected Douglas. "There is a race on between Westmoreland and Benedict for

possession of the papers in that building, but the man who gets them will have to do so by full authority."

He glanced down the street toward the blazing buildings as another charge of dynamite shook the earth and reverberated through the shattered buildings about him.

"Perhaps the fire will settle the question for both parties."

Douglas went back to his sentinel.

"Keep out of sight as much as you can," he said. "Do not walk your post, but stand in the shadow and keep your ears and eyes wide open. See that no one gets into the building."

"Very well, sir," said the sentinel, and he moved back into the shadow and stood in the angle of the wall from which he could see both sides of the building along which an approach could be made under cover.

As Douglas returned to the street after his minute inspection of the grounds about the building, he met Tom Jenkins with Roland.

Roland sank on the curbstone as Jenkins addressed the young officer.

"I done the best I could, sir," said he, "but we got there too late. The building had gone

down a full story straight into the earth and what was left above ground caved in toward the center. I don't guess there was many got out alive. Me and Roland we dug down into the ruins, but both his mother and sister was dead. We got out the bodies jest a little ahead of the fire, and carried them off to an open space. There was some others there by that time and an officer said we'd start a new graveyard right there, so we turned to and buried both side by side and marked the graves. I don't guess there is anything more to do."

Roland's head was resting upon his hand, and down his cheeks the big tears were coursing through the smoke stains on his face.

"Never mind, Roland," said Douglas, "the company will stand by you. You'd better go up and get a bite to eat from Corporal Jones and then go to sleep. You will find a blanket in the kitchen."

Roland moved off, his head bowed and his eyes swimming with tears which he could not restrain.

When he had gone Jenkins said in a low tone, "I heard what had happened over there

in that building just before I came up. That's the place that Blair Parkinson used to go sometimes to get orders. Has the lieutenant suspected anything about who was trying to get in?"

"You never can be sure, Jenkins," said Douglas, "and your guess is as good as mine."

Jenkins gazed up at the building, his eyes glittering with that light which Douglas had seen in them the night he had caught Jenkins watching him from the roof above the porch.

Douglas left him and moved on to supervise the work of resisting the further advance of the flames.

Another block and a half had been converted into ashes and everywhere the fire had gained in force and increased in extent. Steadily the separate conflagrations were uniting and across the city stretched the line of fires, broken at but a few points. Thus far the efforts to arrest the advancing flames had been fruitless.

The military and civil authorities were in conference upon the subject, but another day of fruitless effort was to pass before the re-

sponsible parties could be convinced that all buildings must be destroyed across the city in a zone so wide that the army, intrenched in this position and capable of using its full force, might stamp out every flame which might reach across and thus save the portion of the city which lay beyond. All night long the weary men fought a losing fight and morning found them worn and exhausted but still full of courage and hope. But reënforcements were en route from Vancouver Barracks and Monterey and the weary men were once more inspired to renewed efforts.

About the kitchen the men gathered with scorched faces and bloodshot eyes and ate their scanty breakfast in silence. The strain had been too great to allow all to continue their labors without rest. Douglas divided his company into reliefs so that one-third might rest while the others assisted in fighting the fire.

The crowd was again gathering, no longer a panic-stricken people. They had grasped the magnitude of the situation which had befallen them and with characteristic courage the stronger element was prepared to face their

loss and repair the damage, but two hundred and fifty thousand were now homeless and were gathered in the parks awaiting the dawn in hunger. The Commissary Depot had been destroyed, but during the night train upon train had arrived with loads of rations and supply stations had been established to reach every camp within the city. Thirty thousand tents from the Presidio alone had been erected under the supervision of officers, and the first morning after this ever memorable catastrophe found the army ready to feed the stricken people. Packing boxes were converted into tables, the bakeries and supply houses which had not been destroyed were put into vigorous operation and all the remaining resources of the city were utilized to the fullest extent.

But among the first sections destroyed by the quake and swept by the fire were those in which the poorest people lived. They saw themselves homeless and hungry yet without the means of purchasing the necessary food for themselves and their children. About them lay the food and supplies valued at millions, unprotected except by the army which stood between them and the gratifica-

tion of their desires. It was hard to realize that each must take his turn, that order and discipline must prevail in spite of hunger, but only in such manner could the weak be protected and fed as well as the strong, and the army was determined that all should be protected alike.

In the better section which Douglas controlled he had already sufficient evidence of man's brutality to convince him of the necessity for stern repressive measures. Every effort to break through the lines had been checked; in no case except at the banking house had the men been compelled to use the rifle, but with each hour the number rendered homeless was rapidly increasing and the situation was becoming more tense.

For three days and nights Douglas had had but little sleep or rest. His eyes were swollen and smarting. His clothing was black with smoke and dirt and his aching limbs trembled with fatigue. But he could not stop. There was no other officer with the company, and the fate of a city was at stake. He could not think of rest while he possessed the strength to work.

Instructions were given to the company for the day and Douglas was turning away to attend to their execution when Benedict rushed up to him in the street. "Has any one been allowed to enter the bank?" said he eagerly, his eyes indicating the big banking house beyond.

"No," said Douglas; "some one tried to get in last night, but the sentinel fired upon him and he got away. No one will be allowed to go in without authority."

"Fine," said Benedict, his eyes brightening. "There is time yet. I shall be ready in less than twenty-four hours." He looked down the street. "That fire is gaining rapidly. How fast it is coming."

"At the rate of about a block in two hours," said Douglas. "It will never be stopped unless the policy is abandoned of demolishing the buildings so close to the fire. We must fall back and make a gap which the fire cannot cross, otherwise the entire city will be burned."

"Will it reach the banking house before tomorrow morning?"

"Yes."

Benedict gasped. "I cannot get the necessary legal business through so soon. Atwell, I must have those papers."

"Then you will have to hurry, because you can't get them without the proper authority."

"But the other side?"

"The same for them. No one will cross that line who is not entitled to cross it. I do not believe any one is likely to try it again."

"I will make it in time," said Benedict. "It must be done—my whole case rests on getting those papers now."

He rushed away, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, his thoughts not upon the destruction of San Francisco but upon his future as a lawyer, which seemed to depend upon the security of a single building toward which the fire was slowly creeping.

The crowd had gathered again to watch the desperate fight of dynamite and flames, and there among the faces fifty yards away from the line established by the company Douglas saw Westmoreland watching with an anxiety pictured in his features which betrayed the depth of his interest. Like Benedict, the destruction of the city was the matter of least

concern with him. The matter of moment was the protection of his personal interests.

Douglas watched him closely for a few moments; then he called the sergeant of the guard and without attracting attention to his act, directed the sergeant's gaze upon the lawyer standing in the crowd.

"Under no circumstances let that man cross the line established about the bank," said Douglas. "There are special reasons why he should be kept out."

"He will not cross, sir," said the sergeant.

Douglas glanced about. "Where is Roland McGrew?"

"Corporal Jones sent him with a message to some one, a Miss Dryden, I think. She is over in Golden Gate Park, and wanted to know how far the fire had advanced down Market Street."

Douglas flushed. Could it be possible that Alice too was so deeply interested in this sordid scheme that nothing else could occupy her mind? A great city was perishing in the flames. Hundreds had been killed and rude wooden slabs marked their graves in the open places about the city; thousands had been

wounded, and several hundred thousand had been rendered homeless. Ordinarily the mind is paralyzed by the magnitude of such a catastrophe, but in the midst of it all here came the inquiry from the Drydens which seemed to indicate that their only interest centered like that of Benedict and Westmoreland in the safety of the contents of this banking house.

He looked at the approaching fire with a feeling of utter indifference—the kind of feeling which comes over the soldier in campaign when the burdens of life have become so great that all danger is treated with the same stoical disregard. But like the loyal soldier he moved straight on to his post of duty.

Close up to the burning buildings he fought the flames side by side with the firemen. When a man sank in his place he seized him, carried him out of danger and performed his work. The flames scorched his face and buildings crashed about him, but he did not care. The wind sprang up toward noon and drove the flames with ever increasing vigor toward the banking house about which the

interests of three persons seemed to center with suddenly increasing intensity.

Leaving his men at their task he walked up the street toward the kitchen. His sentinel was there, his eyes fixed upon the wall he had been ordered to watch, and Douglas passed on.

Reliefs were changed. A cup of hot coffee and a few pieces of hardtack sufficed for dinner, and he was ready for the work of the afternoon. He saw Westmoreland still standing in the crowd as he left, and he resumed his work. At last a decision had been reached to destroy buildings at sufficient distance from the fire to warrant safety to the rest of the city and the decision as to where demolitions would begin must rest primarily with local commanders. Operations were to begin when the sections of field artillery arrived with the explosives. So the afternoon passed, the weary men ever backing while the booms of exploding charges resounded over the city as over a battle-field.

It was after dark when Douglas secured a cup filled with coffee and sat with his back resting against the wall while he drank.

How luxurious the rest felt to his weary body and brain. He laid aside his cup and leaned back against the wall. He had no intention of remaining, but nature demands rest, and in a moment he was sound asleep. How long he remained there he did not know, but he was finally awakened by a heavy shaking upon his shoulder, and saw the sergeant of the guard standing over him. Beside the sergeant was Tom Jenkins.

"Jenkins says he saw a light in that bank across the street, sir," said the sergeant, "but the sentinel says he saw no one enter. I thought I'd better wake you, sir."

"I saw the light flash up, sir, like the light of a bull's-eye lantern. There ain't no mistake about it, sir. Look! Look!"

Douglas raised his eyes toward the second story window, and the chills crept over him as he plainly saw a flash of light apparently shielded by a hand, then darkness and again a flash.

The young officer sprang to his feet.

"Have the corporal put men around the building on all sides. Then come along with me. I am going after that man."

"Will you let me go with you, lieutenant?"

"Yes," said Douglas, "come if you like."

The sentinels were quietly placed in a moment. Then Douglas shifted his revolver to his hip, and crossed the street, followed by the sergeant and Tom Jenkins.

Past the sentinel they crept and up the pile of broken stones to the hole in the wall. With a spring Douglas reached it, drew himself up and gave a hand to those behind.

Once inside the building they tiptoed about in the darkness until the stairs were reached, and then in single file they moved softly up, halting to listen from time to time.

With the utmost care Douglas mounted to the top of the second flight and stood in the darkness. Not a sound came from the portion of the room in which he had seen the light. The roar and crackle of the burning buildings sounded in the distance, but otherwise the silence of the tomb seemed to reign through the room.

"Stand here, sergeant," whispered Douglas. "I am going to investigate. Don't shoot. Use the butt of your rifle."

Douglas tiptoed forward. He had gone half-way across the room before he knew that Jenkins was close behind him. The latter then moved out toward the wall, and with that stealth which he had learned only too well in his days in the slums he advanced toward the spot at which he had seen the light. He was lost in the darkness, and not a sound came from the direction in which he went. Exactly what happened must remain forever unrecorded in the history of Tom Jenkins. Suffice it to say that a wild shout suddenly echoed through the room and the sound of a furious struggle was heard.

"Drive him toward the window, Jenkins," shouted Douglas, as he groped his way toward the sound of the furious combat, but he was helpless in the darkness. Across the floor the two men plunged, gasping, panting and crashing against the articles of furniture with a violence which indicated the fierceness of the struggle. Douglas followed, unable to assist, unable to see, but calling words of encouragement to Jenkins and urging him to get to the light of the window. They were moving toward the wall on the inside of the building,

and the snarl of pain and distress which came through the darkness seemed to indicate that Jenkins' opponent was yielding to the grip of his wonderful muscles. Straight across the room staggered the men, and then the sounds of the struggle suddenly ceased and from without there arose a frightful scream followed by a crash two stories below. Douglas stood aghast. They had fallen through the hole in the wall, and he himself was within two paces of the edge of the floor.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE HANDS OF FATE

DOUGLAS and the sergeant slowly retraced their steps down the dark stairs and hurried to the side of the building on which Jenkins and his opponent had fallen. Roland McGrew followed, his eyes big with the excitement and horror of what had occurred. The sergeant struck a match on the butt of his rifle and held it over the two men. There lay Blair Parkinson, his bony fingers relaxed in death about the handle of a knife. He had died as he had lived, a criminal of the most dangerous kind, and his last act had been an effort to carry with him the man who had rebelled at his control and had abandoned "the gang" in the hope of returning to the ways of honest men. Douglas recoiled as he looked at the long blade which Jenkins with his powerful arm had been able to ward off. What would have been the result had Douglas himself collided with Parkinson in the dark? At his

best he was no match for the giant convict except in agility and quickness, and, weakened by his tremendous exertions of the last three days and nights, there could be but little doubt of the outcome. Jenkins with his keener intuition of the probable conduct of the man in the room had, with full knowledge of the danger involved, placed himself between Douglas and Parkinson and had accepted the chances of combat.

Douglas held a lighted match close to his face. The blood was pouring from his mouth and nose, and a closer inspection showed that his right arm was broken and his shoulder cut to the bone by a stroke of the knife which, now stained with his blood, lay beside him.

“But his heart is beating,” said Douglas, as he felt of his pulse, “and he has a fighting chance of recovery. He must have forced Parkinson back expecting to land him against the wall. They went through the opening, and I judge from the few bruises on Jenkins’ body that he must have fallen on top of his man, thus saving himself and increasing the injury to Parkinson.”

It was unnecessary to make an examination

of the latter. He was dead beyond the shadow of a doubt. A glance at his pockets showed that he had nothing but a few cents on his person, and led to the belief that the papers which Benedict and Westmoreland so much desired must still be somewhere in the building. He had taken his chances in attempting to obtain them, and death had come to him as a just penalty for his crimes.

"Sergeant," said Douglas, "send a man immediately to the surgeon on duty with the battalion, present my compliments and say that I request him to come here to look over a man who is badly injured. Then get the litter and have this fellow carried away and buried. Mark his grave with the name Blair Parkinson. Do not allow the matter to be talked about in any way in the company."

The sergeant departed at once to carry out his instructions, and Douglas bent over Jenkins and poured some water between his teeth. The blood was issuing in spurts from his left arm, indicating that an artery had been severed, and Douglas tied his handkerchief over the arm above the cut, laid a stone over the artery, slipped the knife through the

loop, and twisted till the blood ceased to flow and the danger of death from this source was gone.

In a few moments the surgeon came.

"I think he will live," said he, "though he is pretty badly shaken up." Then he had the body laid upon a stretcher and Tom Jenkins was carried away to be furnished the best medical attendance available in his fight for life. Behind him came Blair Parkinson on the way to his last resting place.

Douglas watched their disappearance in the darkness, and then he turned his face toward the raging flames which swept on toward the building behind which the tragedy had just occurred. The progress made by the conflagration while he slept astonished him. He pulled out his watch. It was one o'clock. Six hours had passed, yet it seemed but a few moments since he sat down at the base of the building to rest.

Three blocks had been added to the thousands of buildings which stood black and smoking or lying in heaps of ashes and twisted iron girders, while the fire front had extended to both flanks and now advanced in one con-

tinuous line nearly three miles long. Banked high above the burning buildings hung dense clouds of smoke through which long tongues of flame leaped, while the roar of the conflagration could be heard for half a mile.

Douglas looked anxiously about. Within six hours the fate of the building must be decided. On either flank he understood the dynamiters had successfully demolished a wide area, but as yet no explosives had reached him and he must await his orders. No doubt the plan was clearly defined and contemplated demolitions first at the points at which the fire had made the greatest progress. News had spread through the city that the army was to make its stand on the third day, and already a crowd had gathered and watched the progress of events with an anxiety which grew each moment. Would the army successfully resist the further advance of the roaring flames, or would all this struggle prove in vain and the anxious watchers see their last hopes vanish with the spectacle of the fire sweeping on over the demolished area and eating into the sections beyond?

Time was necessary. The advance must be

checked as much as possible to allow the demolition to be complete and the line continuous.

"Watch the building while I am gone, sergeant," said Douglas. "I am going forward to fight the fire."

He walked down the street and joined the section at work along his front. The painful exhaustion of both firemen and soldiers was apparent at a glance. They had begun this terrible fight together, each in his proper uniform, but there in the blaze of light one could scarcely distinguish soldier from fireman. With clothing saturated and so stained with smoke and dust that its original color was not distinguishable, hats gone and garments rent, the men stood side by side and faced the fire. Within the last hour a small supply of water had been secured and every available hose was in operation.

Douglas took his place with the men. It was necessary to arrest the progress of the fire at all hazards. He mounted the ladder and directed a hose through the window of a burning building, but what was this tiny stream against a fire front of three miles?

The uselessness of the effort was soon apparent, and when the crackling of the walls gave the first indication of the collapse of the building Douglas was forced to abandon the work and leave the ladder. He had scarcely reached the bottom when the wall bulged outward and crashed in the street, and as the cloud of smoke and dust rose high above their heads the imprisoned flames shot upward and leaped into the open windows of the next building.

Back once more the patient workers moved and resumed their task at the next point of vantage. Douglas gazed eagerly up the street for the coming of the explosives which would permit the work of demolition to be resumed. They must come soon, for already the flames were pushing past the flanks and reaching onward toward the banking building where Blair Parkinson had died. In a few hours the flames would be creeping through its columns, reducing to ashes everything not protected by the great vaults and safes in which perhaps the papers so much desired by Benedict and Westmoreland were safely deposited. But were they in safes? If so, why

had Parkinson apparently sought to secure them? No one but the officers of the bank would be allowed to enter the vaults, and unless exposed to the danger of destruction there would be no reason for attempting a search of the building. The thought came to Douglas like a revelation which placed a new construction upon the situation, and as he worked he constantly turned his gaze toward the big building toward which the fighting line was steadily retreating.

The gray light of dawn was breaking in the east when the young officer left his men and walked back along the line of sentinels to the kitchen. He was drenched with water and almost exhausted. It would be impossible to pass another day without a collapse, yet he had no intention of yielding until the fight was terminated in a successful stand of the army on the chosen line.

As Douglas approached the kitchen he saw the sergeant in conversation with a civilian who was apparently trying to cross the line.

"You can't cross," he heard the sergeant say, "unless you get permission from Lieu-

tenant Atwell. He is down there fighting the fire."

"What is it?" said Douglas, and as the civilian faced him, he recognized Westmoreland.

"Why—good-morning, Mr. Atwell," said Westmoreland, but Douglas had no time for mock courtesies.

"What was your business with the sergeant?" he said sharply.

"I am going into the bank across the street. I see that the fire is making such progress that the building will probably be burned before noon and I must take out some personal effects."

"By what authority do you enter?"

"Why—you know that I am connected with the bank."

"I understand something of your connection with the bank, but no one can enter that building except the president of the bank in person."

"But I must enter," protested Westmoreland. "What right have you to stop me?"

Douglas smiled. "Do you see that sentinel?"

His rifle is loaded with ball cartridges, and he has his orders to shoot. It has been necessary for him to do so once to protect this building from such criminals as you. If you would like to find out what will happen, just try to cross that line."

Westmoreland turned his haggard eyes toward the sentinel standing quietly at his post, his rifle at the order. He visibly shrank, and suddenly changing his manner, abandoned all appearance of bravado and began to beg. He clung to Douglas' arm with nervous twitching fingers and pleaded for permission to snatch from the path of the coming flames the papers which would win success for himself and impose ruinous burdens on the whole community.

"I have heard your case over and over again," said Douglas with impatience, "and have told you that I despise you and your scheme. You have chosen to bring your personal affairs here when the city is burning and hundreds of thousands are losing all they have in life, and I can only say that if you do not get out of here at once I will whip you like a dog in the street."

Westmoreland turned away his face contorted with anger and hatred which he could not attempt to gratify. His last effort had failed. The plan by which he had built up his hopes of dishonest aggrandizement had collapsed and the power to frustrate him had fallen into the hands of men who could not be bought. As he went, an orderly rode up and asked, "Where is Lieutenant Atwell?"

"Here," said Douglas.

"The commanding officer presents his compliments, sir, and says that explosives will be here in half an hour. He directs you to begin work at once without further instructions."

The orderly saluted and left, and Douglas at once laid his plans for the work of demolition. His heart beat furiously as he watched the fire and looked at his watch. The banking building in front of which he stood would be in half an hour exactly on the dividing line between the portion of the city to be abandoned and the portion to be saved. If saved Benedict would no doubt secure authority to place the papers before the court

and continue the prosecution of Mr. Dryden and his associates. In that event Westmoreland, by his genius for evading the requirements of the law, might win his case and continue a conspicuous character in the political graft of the city, but Benedict had not appeared and in half an hour he would be too late. If the building was destroyed the evidence which Benedict sought as well as the whole structure on which Westmoreland had built his career would vanish within a few hours.

But these considerations must not enter into the decision as to what was to be done. There was a plain duty to the city to be fulfilled without regard to the parties to be benefited or injured. The point at which the city was to be abandoned to destruction must be fixed by the progress made by the flames when the explosive arrived—nothing else.

Douglas walked away from the building, watch in hand and waiting for the moment to arrive. As he stood eagerly watching the up-leaping flames envelop another building, he heard the patter of running feet and

glanced over his shoulder to see Roland McGrew approaching.

"Lieutenant," said he, "I have been over to tell Miss Dryden about the fire—where it was, and she came back with me and wants to see you. She is right over there."

Douglas stood uncertain. Was this to be another plea for the protection of the interests at stake? It seemed so, and a feeling of anger and annoyance swept over him, yet courtesy demanded that he comply with the request.

He turned and followed Roland across the street and to the vestibule of a wrecked building a little removed from the main thoroughfare but still within sight of the roaring flames. There stood Alice leaning against a marble pillar amid the ruins of this once beautiful building. It was broad daylight and the anxious city was astir, eager to know what might be the outcome of the coming fight by the army along the position chosen for resisting the progress of the flame.

"Good-morning," said Alice sweetly, but she drew back at sight of the young of-

ficer who was clearly on the verge of collapse.

"How tired and worn out you are. I am ashamed to disturb you, but I feel I must." Her eyes filled with a look of anxiety as she went on. "Roland McGrew has been with me these two terrible days, and I have learned a great deal from him I never knew before. I cannot tell you what a strain it has been. For papa's sake I asked him to keep me informed of the progress of the fire and I knew always what was happening. From papa I learned all the details of this case and what it meant to me and to him if he were to fail in his plans. But I came to know that papa's good name—his honesty, in fact—would be compromised if this case came to trial. He will be charged with bribery and corruption of such character as would disgrace him—and me. I shrink from it, Mr. Atwell. You can understand what it would be to have your own father's name dishonored, and now the chance is coming to save papa. You will do it, Mr. Atwell; I know you cannot refuse."

Douglas felt his temples throb as he lis-



***"I KNOW YOU CANNOT
REFUSE"***

tened, and believed he must refuse, but she went on.

"All the papers in connection with this case are in the Shelton, Love & Co. Banking House and not in the safe or vaults. The people concerned held a meeting there the night of the earthquake, and as all the vaults and safes were locked up when they left the papers were placed in a desk to be taken out the next morning. When the crash came, Mr. Love left the city. He seized this opportunity to break his connection with the case and to throw all responsibility upon papa—and papa must be saved."

Far up the street sounded the rattle of a field artillery caisson and Douglas saw with a start that the expected explosives were approaching. Alice saw too and seizing Douglas by the sleeve, she cried, "Don't go, don't go till you promise that you will let the bank burn. If it burns papa will lose his fortune, will lose everything, but he will save his name and his honor. He let me decide for him. I decide, and I beg that you let the bank burn. The money deposited is safe in

the vaults. No harm can come to it or to depositors, but the papers are exposed which disgrace my father. You saved him from death in the hotel, save him now from dishonor."

Douglas had turned his face away. His hands were behind his back, and his eyes were fixed upon the leaping flames which moved steadily onward toward the banking house about which the interests of the Drydens were centered.

He had expected to hear Alice plead again for the protection of the millions which would contribute to her position in society and increase her magnificent fortune, but to his astonishment, he heard her plead for the destruction of it all for the preservation of an ideal.

On came the caissons thundering over the warped and bulging streets and Douglas stood mute, fascinated by the revelation which had come to him.

He felt the girl's icy fingers close upon his hand with a trembling touch, and then as a sergeant of artillery dismounted and approached, she dropped her hands by her

sides, her eyes shining like stars in a clear sky.

"Sergeant," said Douglas, as he glanced at his watch and then at the rolling columns of smoke, "take the explosives to that corner and get ready for immediate work. Let that block containing the bank burn. I will show you where to begin demolitions in a moment."

There had been ten minutes' delay in the arrival of explosives. It was too late to save the banking house. Westmoreland had lost and so had Benedict. Had the caisson arrived ten minutes earlier Douglas would not have consented to save the bank and with it the evidence against Mr. Dryden, but some one had delayed. The bank must burn, yet he had never faltered in his duty.

As the sergeant sprang back into the saddle, Douglas turned to the girl with the future pictured in his eyes. He took her unresisting hands in his and said, "I never knew you before, Alice. Is it really true?"

She looked up at him with the tears sparkling on her eyelids.

"It has been true for years, Douglas," she said softly; "we needed an earthquake, though,

to bring it about." She dashed away the tears.

"But did you hear about Rory?"

"No, what has happened to Rory?"

"Gertrude," said Alice.

Other Stories in this Series are :

WINNING HIS WAY TO WEST POINT

A PLEBE AT WEST POINT

A WEST POINT YEARLING

A WEST POINT CADET



This book should be returned to
the Library on or before the last date
stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred
by retaining it beyond the specified
time.

Please return promptly.

~~APR 32 1912~~

